Speech and Debate Educators' Perceptions About the Programs in Primary School

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ABSTRACT

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Skills such as identifying evidence, evaluating the credibility of information sources, analyzing complex historical and geopolitical issues from multiple perspectives, asking good questions, and forming and articulating a point of view are useful for succeeding in school and in life. Speech and debate training can help students learn and practice these skills and is widely available in many independent elementary and middle schools, yet it is generally not available in public elementary and middle schools. There has been virtually no research on this topic. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore the perceptions of speech and debate professionals with respect to benefits, curriculum and pedagogy, feasibility, and acceptability concerning speech and debate programs in public primary schools. Using the snowball sampling technique, 25 speech and debate professionals in different parts of the speech and debate ecosystem and in different parts of the United States were identified and interviewed using a semi-structured qualitative approach. The findings indicated that speech and debate training supports health literacy and social-emotional development in students as early as elementary school by contributing to multiple aspects of "whole child" wellness, including through the promotion of identity development, mental health, psychological strengths, and life skills at essential periods of development. The findings underscored the importance of a culturally relevant pedagogical approach wherein students critically respond to, analyze, and interrogate larger social structural issues through the lens of their own cultural experiences and identities. Despite the consensus that nearly any educator can facilitate speech and debate instruction with

limited training, there are several impediments to adoption and implementation, including time and school-community support. Speech and debate training requires many hours across multiple days to implement effectively. Gaining support across the curriculum from teachers and administrators was facilitated by these stakeholders having first-hand experience and observing positive outcomes for students. Policy and practice implications are proposed along with recommendations for future research relevant to increasing speech and debate programming in public elementary schools.

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Chapter I: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Background and Context

Communication through speech has aided in human survival. Despite not being the strongest species, humans have long managed to dominate the animal kingdom. Their competitive advantage, and the key to their survival, can be found in the origins of communication. It has helped people build civilizations and coordinate and develop complex systems within those civilizations.

Given the aptitudes that would be required to build civilizations, human linguistic activities requiring sophisticated language practices were necessary. As language and communication has evolved throughout the millennia, cultural and societal beliefs, practices, and customs have made contributions. Thus, present-day oral communication has remnants of many civilizations. However, the difficulty of translating extinct languages, the condition of many surviving texts, and the ways in which knowledge of cultures has been preserved and passed down throughout the generations make it difficult to have a comprehensive account of the many peoples who have led to the speech and debate training we practice today. Despite those limitations, the study and practice of public speaking and debate cultivated by many civilizations date as far back as the Kemetic people of Ancient Africa, who considered speech as being central to personal life and governance (Fox, 1983). Eloquent speech was viewed as a virtue that could be improved through instruction to accomplish all of life's goals (p. 12). Later, the Ancient Greeks were instrumental in the training of argumentation and public forum contests, as they recognized the importance of persuasive speech as central to democracy.

Rhetoric, which means "the principles of training communicators—those seeking to persuade or inform" (Sloane and Perelman, 2019, para. 1), was widely used in the classical period of Ancient

Greece. In 5th century BCE in Ancient Greece, oral communication in the form of rhetoric was one of the main pillars of education used to produce good citizens. It was used in the circles of Socrates and continued to advance among Greek philosophers. By the 4th century, Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle continued to expand the topic of rhetoric. Isocrates began to teach rhetoric in 390 BC and was credited with founding the most successful school of rhetoric in Athens (Benoit, 1990; Wagner, 1922). Isocrates was followed by Aristotle who developed the principles of rhetoric still in use today.

In ancient Greece, the Socratic method was a progressive education that "leads to critical thinking skills by showing students how to identify the weak points in an argument" (Scholle, 2020, para. 5). By showing students the whole truth, they can distinguish right from wrong (Dillon, 2004). In addition, "Plato regarded education as a means to achieve justice, both individual justice and social justice" (Lee, 1994). Plato was a proponent of dialect as a means to achieve individual and social justice, a form of excellence. "The aim of the dialectical method, often known as dialectic or dialectics, is to try to resolve the disagreement through rational discussion" (Dialectic, n.d.). Moreover, two opposing viewpoints does not suggest that the conversation should end; rather, it should spur dialogue. "The contradiction between two conflicting forces is viewed as the determining factor in their continuing interaction" (Dialectic, n.d.). Aristotle "championed the idea that a person's ability to speak and write well, and to use rhetorical devices to change another's perspective, could unleash human potential and maximize happiness" (Gallo, 2019); thus, for him, the aim of rhetorical education was bringing happiness into the lives of humans to improve their welfare. Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates all shared a common thread: Their concept of educational best practices included ways to produce better

thinkers through communication. The art of persuasive oral or written discourse was a way of life in ancient Greece, and discourse was woven into the fabric of the citizens' education system.

"Rhetoric has come to be understood less as a body or theory or as certain types of artificial techniques and more as an integral component of all human discourse" (Sloane and Perelman, 2019, para. 6). Campbell (2006) drew parallels between African oratory to the rhetoric of Ancient Greece with an examination of how the deliberative, judicial, and epideictic speech practiced by Aristotle in Ancient Greece was introduced earlier in Ancient African societies. Rhetorical tradition dates as far back in Ancient Africa to the teachings of the Ptahhotep, who was a Vizier under King Isesi in the 5th dynasty (2388–2356 BCE). Fox (1983) described "rhetoric" as having "an equivalent in an Egyptian phrase that means literally "The principle of fine speech," as explained in the ancient text called *The Instruction of Ptahhotep* (Fox, 1983, pp. 11-12). The rhetorical Instruction was a moral obligation, as members of society would take on positions of leadership in family, vocation, and daily life. In Ancient Africa, among the Kemetic people in Egypt, eloquence was highly regarded to reinforce the practices of rules of government in society. Within the Egyptian social system, rhetoric was more important to support society than to question and challenge the existing social practices, rules, norms, and customs. Rhetoric was used to instruct. As such, the primary tenets of rhetoric was to use language to support, to not bring discord, and to add value to public and personal settings. Emphasis was placed on speaking well and being truthful as part of personal morality (Hutto, 2020, p. 8). The emphasis was to build good citizens who added value to their personal and public lives. "Rhetorical rules for the good citizen reinforced the social status quo, rather than challenge and exploring it" (p. 1). Ptahhotep viewed rhetoric as an essential part of governance and public and private life.

"Egyptian advice about eloquence is usually not limited specifically to public oratory. Much applies to private conversations as well" (Fox, 1983, p. 12).

Among the Western African culture of the Mande people dating back to the 13th century, oral communication in the form of storytelling was an important tradition. Through oral communication, humans have been able to pass along detailed information from generation to generation, resulting in the progressive building of knowledge. Griots also known as jelis were storytellers who served as village historians and entertainers. They commonly traveled from village to village giving live stories packed with humor, theatrics, comedy, and morality. Griots were an important part of Ancient Africa's cultural, social, and educational life as they memorized and maintained community history and mythical stories. Throughout the centuries, their communication skills earned them recognition. They were commonly requested as mediators called on to resolve disagreements and disputes, and in the Mali Empire, it was griots who often served as an emperor's counselor and spokesperson. In various forms of today's speech and debate, the influences of the griots can be found.

Speech and Debate in Politics

Throughout the millennia, democracy has existed in many forms but, at its heart, democracy rests on a very simple idea that, in some form, the people of a system deserve the right to influence their government. Speech and debate have always been used to influence the government. We can date this influence back to Ancient Greek democracy, established in the 6th century BC. In the same vein, nearly a century after the founding of the United States, the Reconstruction Era marked a turning point in history. The Civil War led to speeches on civil liberties, helping to facilitate the reintegration of the southern states into the union and the freeing of millions of African Americans (History.com, 2021). In 1854, the notable and famous

speech on the immorality of slavery given by Lincoln in Illinois highlighted the speeches of the era (History.com Editors, 2021).

Furthermore, many of this country's great speeches and debates have taken place on the Senate floor, some creating turning points in history in the struggle for basic human rights and freedom. One compelling example was the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. Enacted after the longest continuous debate in the Senate, the bill eventually arrived on the Senate floor on February 26, 1964, weeks after the House of Representatives voted in its favor on February 10. A cabal of southern Senators, Democrats and Republicans, came together to spearhead a filibuster against the bill, resulting in 60 days of contentious debates over the legislation. It culminated in a powerful speech on racial integration given by an unlikely ally, Republican Minority Leader Evert Dirksen. The Civil Rights Act was voted in by a bipartisan coalition of 27 Republicans and 44 Democrats. The process leading to the Civil Rights Act is the embodiment of speech and debate.

Speech and debate students use the information they gather to inform and alter their direction as well as to influence others. The tremendous power in this lies in how it encourages people to adjust their thinking to frame ideas in ways that will elicit broader support and appeal. Simply put: Speech and debate exposes people to new perspectives and points of view. This, in turn, can lead opposing viewpoints to come together toward more comprehensive resolutions. Another extraordinary example during the Civil Rights movement involved two prominent Black leaders who were often viewed as adversaries, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. One book title captures the duality between the two men: Peniel E. Joseph's *The Sword and the Shield*. As a proponent of Black Nationalism, Malcolm X rejected King's message of nonviolence, insisting that King was leaving his subjects defenseless to their White oppressors. Prior to their respective

assassinations, both Malcolm X and King shifted from their polarized views to become more central. It was clear that in moving closer together to each other in their ideologies, both men needed to consider each other's conflicting perspectives. The end result was a more aggressive Martin Luther King, Jr. and a less militant Malcolm X. On March 26, 1964, while attending the Senate debate on civil rights, Malcolm X and King met briefly. As they walked together down the halls of the Senate building, Malcolm told King, "I'm throwing myself into the heart of the civil rights struggle"—his admission that he was becoming more moderate in his views despite his decades of resistance (Brown, 2018, para. 6). Ultimately, the work of Malcolm X and King required that they advocate for their own views while also being exposed to the other's ideology, leading to growth and change for both men. Fareed Zakari (2020) in "Ten Lessons for a Post-Pandemic World" concluded that focusing on our own views leads to radicalization, whereas the opposite is true if we consider both sides. The constant action of having to express one's differences and explain to supporters why a set of principles is superior will force people to reconcile conflicting ideas and, at times, make concessions (Zakari, 2020).

Speech and debate is ubiquitous. As outlined above, these roots can be traced back to the Kemetic people of Ancient Africa, Ancient Greece, and the Mali Empire of West Africa, and while those do not represent a comprehensive list of the civilizations that placed great emphasis on discourse, those civilizations profoundly influenced the pedagogy of Speech and Debate we utilize today. It has always informed the landscape of politics and government. The easiest place to see it today is in formal presidential debates.

In the mid-1800s, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas debated one of the most important topics in history. At that time, there were no moderators or panels, but only the audience who served as judges. However, the general premise of argumentation found in speech

and debate was the same. Both candidates followed the same campaign trail, delivering remarks and speeches at various locations and sharing many stages before the 1858 election, which won Lincoln the presidency. During these interactions, Lincoln and Douglas delivered lengthy constructive speeches, followed by a rebuttal and a closing speech—the same framework used today for presidential and competitive debates.

Similar to competitive speech and debate, presidential debates involve the use of rhetoric and social-emotional appeals. With the introduction of radio and television in the mid-20th century, debates between political candidates were broadcast to larger segments of the population. The first televised presidential debate took place in 1960 between Democratic nominee John F. Kennedy and Republican nominee Richard Nixon. It quickly became apparent that the power of debate did not rest entirely with the central message but was also very much about peripheral cues. Kennedy understood the power of peripheral cues and how to use them to his advantage. He applied makeup before the broadcast, presenting himself to the viewers as handsome, calm, and comfortable. This was in stark contrast to Nixon's image that viewers received: He "began to sweat, looked unshaven, and shifted his eyes between the camera, the moderators, and the clock" (Bill of Rights Institute, n.d.). Audience members who listened to the debate on the radio had a very different experience than those with the television. Kennedy was perceived more favorably than Nixon by TV viewers and less favorably by radio listeners. In contrast, radio listeners were swayed by Nixon's language and inflections in tone, rating him as the winner of the debate, while home viewers reported that Nixon appeared ill-at-ease and unprofessional in comparison to Kennedy (Bill of Rights Institute, n.d.).

Debaters know all too well the importance of demonstrating confidence and prowess, commonly referred to as perceptual dominance. While an intangible quality, perceptual

dominance "refers to the desired mix of ethos, credibility, comfort, and performative prowess" demonstrated by a debater (Sonnenberg, 2012, p. 41). During cross-examinations when debaters ask and answer each other's questions, comfort and confidence in a debater's tone of voice, poise, or eye contact can be more easily discerned. In the case of Nixon and Kennedy, the different viewing experiences gave voters an opportunity to evaluate each speaker's perceptual dominance either through audio or audiovisual cues. These decidedly different experiences nonetheless share a commonality in the power of debate to sway voters' opinions.

Not only can poor debating skills prove disastrous, as was the case with a widely publicized mishap of President Gerald Ford, but a refusal to debate can have negative consequences, as with President Jimmy Carter. In a 1976 debate between Ford and Carter, Ford misspoke about Eastern Europe geopolitics and then doubled down defending his remarks to the media. This later proved to be harmful to Ford's re-election. In 1980, Carter refused to debate the independent candidate John Anderson, while Reagan, known by many as the great communicator, was there for the challenge (Walsh & Cannon, 1980). It is speculated that these issues may have been factors contributing to both Ford and Carter losing their re-elections.

More recent examples of the power of speech and debate in politics include the 2016 debates between presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. In a 2017 study, researchers Guadalupe and Salvatore recreated scenes from the second presidential debate in October 2016 between Clinton and Trump, but assigned a male actor to play Clinton and a female actor to play Trump. In the actual debate, Trump was overly aggressive and physical toward Clinton, "crowding her as she replied to questions, and speaking in a discourteous, bullying manner toward her throughout [the debate]" (LeVine, 2016). In the staged reenactment, the female actor (Trump) demonstrated the same behaviors he demonstrated on television. Given

the widespread stereotype that women who display masculine behaviors are poorly perceived, one might assume that the female Trump would be viewed harshly, but this was not the case. In fact, one male study participant concluded, “That actress could run for president in 2024. I’m not joking.”

Regardless of gender, this phenomenon speaks to the impact of ethos as speakers establish credibility with an audience through perceptual dominance—a skill that is taught in speech and debate. A speaker’s authority and credibility have consistently been shown as shaping election outcomes, and similarly it has helped speech and debate contenders win tournament rounds. There are a number of reasons that speech and debate training helps students send a strong and credible message. First, debate teaches students to look and sound believable; delivery, tone, and pitch are all elements that can be used to sway opinion. Second, debaters are taught to organize their thinking to deliver content in a way that conveys a larger message in the form of a claim; they support their evidence and logic while also telling listeners why the claim matters. Last and perhaps most important, speech and debate training teaches debaters how to adapt their messaging for different audiences. The rhetoric a debater uses when being evaluated by a layman adjudicator is very different from speaking with someone in the debate circuit. These nuances in messaging are important because they enhance performance and an evaluator’s perceptions.

Establishment of Forensics

It can also be useful to delve into the history of forensics organizations and the people who influenced forensics activities today. The first established competitive university teams were spearheaded by the Adelphi Literary Society of Knox College in 1874. The Society sent an invitation to Western colleges for live “friendly rival” speeches where rostrums were used for

speech delivery. The live event was scheduled on February 27, 1874, at the City Opera House of Galesburg, Illinois. Invitees were also asked to participate in the planning and organization of future Interstate Oratorical Contests (IOC). Among the following seven colleges invited, the first six accepted the initial invite: Beloit College, Chicago University, Illinois State Industrial University, Iowa College, Iowa State University, Monmouth College, and Wisconsin State University. Planning led to the establishment of the Interstate Oratorical Association (IOA), an association formally established on June 9, 1874, with the drafting of their constitution. By 1891, 63 colleges from Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin were active members of the IOA (Prather, 1891).

During this time, Thomas Trueblood emerged as an oration pioneer. Trueblood established the first speech and debate classes in 1884 as well as the first university Elocution and Oratory department in 1892—both at the University of Michigan. Under his mentorship, the University of Michigan became the top-ranked competitive collegiate team. The Northern Oratorical Leagues and century Debate League also benefited from Trueblood's guidance.

In the late 19th century, "Many of the speeches [given at the IOC] used value appeals to make arguments about government structure, the different roles the government played, and the responsibility the government has to its citizens" (Roth, 2020). The "broad values appeal" of the era was exemplified by Charles W. Wood from Beloit College (Roth, 2020). In the 1895 IOC annual competition, Wood delivered a notable speech, "The Better Personality," for which he earned second-place recognition. As an African American male, Wood's achievement was remarkable at a time where the field was dominated by White male competitors and adjudicators.

In his 1907 article "Qualities of a Winning Oration," Trueblood prescribed an organization and structure for use in oration, which influenced the IOC speeches to follow.

According to Trueblood, to "grow mentally [a speaker] must not only gather thought from other sources but must compare that thought with his own conception of the fitness of things" (p. 11). Here, in doing so, Trueblood made the case that "all good speaking" requires critical thought and analysis. He proposed that there are five necessary elements for good speeches: "good subject," in which the speech should be developmentally appropriate for the speaker's maturity and abilities; "gathering material," or being mindful of the audience and judges; "constructing the oration," ensuring that it is relevant to present-day issues; "style," or selecting content that the speaker finds important and is passionate about; and "delivery," which should demonstrate the speaker's personal authority in the matter being discussed (Trueblood, 1907).

After the turn of the 20th century, many speeches shifted from broad value to content that reflected the historic landscape. In particular, speech structures were more heavily laden to connect personally to the time period and speakers' individual lives. For example, historically influenced themes included the economic hardships of the Great Depression and immigration, both of which gave speakers outlets to reflect on the political, social, and economic climate of the time. In the 20th century was the establishment of the National Forensic League (now known as the National Speech & Debate Association [NSDA]). The NSDA was founded by Bruno E. Jacob in 1925 to motivate high school students to participate in speech and debate activities. As an economics student at Ripon College, Bruno created a pocket handbook entitled "Suggestions for the Debater." The handbook was a prerequisite for the founding of the NSDA. Through the NSDA, educational opportunities for school and student memberships were provided that would otherwise not exist.

At the local, city, and state levels, the National Urban Debate League was founded decades after the founding of the NSDA through the initial efforts of Melissa Wade, whose high

school experience between 1964 and 1968 benefited from a curriculum that included speech and debate as a mandatory requirement for graduation. By her senior year, Wade emerged as the top debater in the country. Recognizing first-hand the value and importance of speech and debate, Wade became the executive director of Forensics at Emory University's Barkley Forum. She was a principal founder of the Atlanta Urban Debate League in 1985; she currently serves as president of the Glenn Pelham Foundation, which provides debate education resources for school-age students across the country. Another noteworthy organization is the Open Society Institute (OSI), which has provided seed support for the Atlanta Debate League and funded the New York City Urban Debate League and countless others. The founding of the National Association Urban Debate League (NAUDL) expanded the already existing network of urban debate leagues to cater to underserved youth in low-income communities. As of 2020, the NAUDL serves 11,000 student debaters in 22 leagues across the country with opportunities to participate in competitive activities.

Problem Statement

Students can derive a multitude of short-term and long-term benefits from participating in speech and debate. At the elementary and middle school level, very few public schools offer school-based instruction that leads to competitive opportunities. This is evidenced by the NSDA only having 370 primary school members as of the 2019-2020 school year, despite there being 87,498 public and private primary schools (67,408 public schools and 20,090 private schools) nationwide (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2021; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). While schools with active speech and debate programs are not required to maintain NSDA memberships, the potential for national recognition, awards, and student scholarships through the NSDA is an

incentive for many schools to join. Consequently, NSDA participation is an excellent way to gauge the prevalence of speech and debate programs across the country. Thus, speech and debate programs have not been as widespread in schools as would be warranted for all the benefits students could gain. Over the last decade, no research has examined speech and debate educators' perceptions of starting and running speech and debate programs in schools. Additionally, there has been no research on the health literacy benefits of speech and debate. This study explored the multiple benefits that speech and debate can offer by conducting in-depth interviews with speech and debate professionals to understand their perceptions of why it is not widespread in schools. It is hoped that this study will accomplish two goals: (a) to encourage educators who influence the elementary and middle curricula to incorporate speech and debate training into student instruction, and (b) to simultaneously motivate a new generation of scholars to choose speech and debate as a topic for research and assessment.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research was to explore with 25 speech and debate professionals their perceptions of the educational and health benefits of speech and debate, and what can be done to bring speech and debate into public primary schools.

Research Questions

1. What do speech and debate professionals perceive are the educational and health benefits of speech and debate?
2. How do speech and debate professionals define the curricula attributes of a successful speech and debate program?
3. What do speech and debate professionals describe as factors that influence the feasibility of a successful speech and debate program?

4. What do speech and debate professionals describe as factors that influence the acceptability of a successful speech and debate program?

Researcher Perspective

In September of 2018, I entered a crowded school building in Long Island City, Queens, for the New York City Urban Debate League's (NYCUDL) first middle school speech and debate competition of the season. In my wildest dreams, I could not have fathomed what I was about to experience and how it would change my life.

Hundreds of middle schoolers were crammed into the cafeteria waiting for their debate rounds to begin. The nerves and excitement among both students and parents in the room were palpable, as students as young as 5th graders were prepared to debate the topic: "The United States federal government should impose price controls on the pharmaceutical industry." Before the actual debates began, I reflected on the demographics of the students present. NYCUDL had gathered students from all across the city who reflected the wonderful diversity in today's United States. Students from 5th to 8th grade were prepared to discuss and debate the merits of price controls in the pharmaceutical industry, a timely but complex topic. As I waited, all I could think to myself is what happens to all the other children around the city who (a) have no idea these challenges of intellectual rigor exist and (b) have to, later in life, contend with counterparts who experienced speech, debating, and critical thinking at this high level during their academic school years. I was in awe of what I was witnessing, and I wanted to scream it off the rooftops, spread the word with a bullhorn, and even make public service announcements that this kind of opportunity exists today.

I felt sympathy for those students who had not received the chance to experience this kind of engagement. On any given Saturday, schools in the surrounding New York City Metro

area were hosting NYCUDL tournaments. Not only were the students in the New York City broader region unaware of the existence of these debates, but I, an educational leader in the community, was unaware of them as well! Moreover, I was actively involved in education: I serviced the after-school enrichment needs of hundreds of elementary school students, taught undergraduate psychology courses, and, as a parent, sat on the leadership team at my children's school. This wonderful mixture of active social and academic engagement had been happening in my own backyard, yet I was completely unaware of it.

All parents want to provide the best education for their children. Most students, I knew from personal experience, have no idea that this kind of debate opportunity exists in their city. If I, as an educational leader, did not know about it, how could we expect the parents of immigrant and disadvantaged children to know about this type of opportunity? This lack of awareness speaks to the enigma of understanding the current education landscape. Immigrant parents are already trying to assimilate into their new society, acquire the ability to discern which schools and standards are best, and simultaneously identify the skills their children need to become functioning members of a brand-new society. It is an unrealistic expectation to place on parents, so, sensibly, parents must entrust that to the larger system in terms of policies and state standards that lead the charge to implement school-based interventions that will prepare their children for future success.

Many well-intentioned parents have listened attentively to all the information their kids' schools send home and completely follow the prescribed mandates and suggestions, only to learn later in their children's lives that their kids were not as prepared as they should have been. While the full burden and responsibility cannot be placed only on the school systems, parents must

understand the expectations for a 21st-century learner, when a child has met those expectations, and which skills are necessary to function successfully.

We have a problem in our society that must be solved: a problem in educational inequity. I had identified this problem much earlier, but I had spent the last decade of my life trying to put it into words. When I learned as an undergraduate that most college newspapers were written at an 8th-grade level, I first learned that all schools are not created equal. At that middle school speech and debate competition, I acquired the words to articulate my recognition of the problem. This topic—how best to teach our students all across America, regardless of their background, parental skills and abilities, origins, gender, and class—touches close to home. In the United States, we sell the dream to the masses that a high school diploma leads to students becoming functioning members of society, while a college degree means even greater success. With a college degree, we tell our students, they will be prepared to tackle the challenges and demands of adulthood. However, in this country, with its disparities in education, this premise is simply untrue.

Many students begin college only to learn they must repeat high school courses in the form of college remedial courses because they are unprepared. Sixty-eight percent of American students who begin a public 2-year institution, along with 40% of students who enter a 4-year institution, are unprepared for the rigors of college (Chen, 2016, p. iv). As a result, the freshman year of college often is referred to as the "13th grade" (Gonzalez, 2012). While data have supported that Black and Hispanics students from low-income, often first-generation backgrounds, comprise the largest percentage of those students in remedial courses (Chen, 2016, p. vi), remedial course enrollment is widespread in all advantaged and disadvantaged subgroups (Barry & Dannenberg, 2016, p. 2). Because high school precedes college, it is easy to blame the

high school curriculum as the probable cause for students' lack of preparation for college (Gonzalez, 2012). However, the deficiency in skills can be traced back even further, all the way to primary school (Barry & Dannenberg, 2016, p. 3). As students are promoted from one grade to the next and eventually enter high school, the alignment between high school expectations and college academic standards is widened. Consequently, the misalignment continues into their adult lives for the students, as the gap extends between their school's academic standards and life expectations.

So, I came to this field with a growing fervor to help close the gap in skills through one solution—speech and debate. As the founder and CEO of Early Scholars, my social impact mission became to create a local business that focuses on educating students in the core skills of speech and debate in students as young as elementary age. It is a simple and great idea, yet it cannot dent the core problem. Because I came from a social entrepreneur lens, I created a solution to solve a problem by creating quality programs that could fill the gaps that the education system did not.

In doing so, I learned that my solution was too small, and despite how much I scaled and other similar organizations promoted speech and debate, it did not solve the problem. Instead, it only further created inequity between the "haves" and the "have-nots." The problem is systemic, and all players in the educational ecosystem must tackle it. Each must do their part to advance research, policy, and assessment to implement speech and debate in public schools.

Does that mean that programs like mine should not exist? Absolutely not! These programs offer supplemental training to those who want to pursue speech and debate at the most competitive levels. However, speech and debate training should be offered to everyone, as this type of instruction is fundamental to learning how to think, organize, and relate to the world.

Education is the most modifiable social determinant, and speech and debate as a school-wide intervention has the potential to equip students to become high-functioning members of 21st-century society. An educated mind should not be parceled out only between the haves and have-nots; instead, it constitutes a basic level of skills that should be afforded to everyone.

In my new role as a doctoral candidate researching speech and debate, I became fueled by my advocacy of the many well-intentioned parents who do all they can to give their children a great, well-rounded education in hopes of realizing the American dream of success.

Chapter II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore with 25 speech and debate professionals their perceptions of the educational and health benefits of speech and debate and what can be done to bring speech and debate back into public primary schools. To frame this study, I selectively and critically reviewed the literature on the following topics, which supported the rationale and significance of this study: health literacy, social-emotional learning (SEL), and the benefits of speech and debate on students' health and well-being. The first topic establishes a context for readers to understand the importance of health literacy in schools. The second topic introduces SEL as beneficial to health literacy and SEL's association with speech and debate. The last topic provides a review of the benefits of speech and debate and how the approaches used align with health literacy goals. I made extensive use of online databases, such as Google Scholar and JSTOR, and also retrieved articles from academic journals and books.

Speech and debate programs can potentially enhance critical thinking (Colbert et al., 1985), literacy (Mirra et al., 2016), and civic awareness (Hlavacik et al., 2016; Shapiro & Brown, 2018). They share similarities to evidence-based SEL programs in their approach to improving social, emotional, and behavioral skills that enhance interpersonal relationships, prosocial behaviors, and academic performance while reducing emotional distress (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017; Ura et al., 2020), which can lead to measurable and potentially long-lasting benefits to students' personal and community health. In the short term, speech and debate programs help elementary and middle school students produce desirable behaviors in various areas of their lives (Cridland-Huges, 2016; Shackelford, 2019). In the long term, students who

gain the competencies that speech and debate can cultivate are equipped to be health-literate and to engage in and promote healthy behaviors throughout their lives.

Those benefits make speech and debate programs an ideal foundation for a public health approach to education. Schools are ideal sites for long-term intervention with students, and speech and debate can promote social and emotional wellness and improve health literacy and behavior as well as overall well-being. However, to realize substantial change to students' health literacy and health promotion behaviors, speech and debate interventions must be fully integrated into the school curriculum. This literature review begins with the importance of health literacy in schools. Next, the positive outcomes of SEL on health literacy are outlined, and the SEL research and speech and debate approaches are reviewed to show how similar benefits can be realized from both types of programs. Then, the review examines how speech and debate has lost its prominence**.** Finally, research is summarized related to how the skills amassed through speech and debate fulfill the aims necessary to achieve students' health literacy and health promotion in schools.

The Importance of Health Literacy in Schools

Schools identify different initiatives that are important for their students from social, temporal, and educational contexts, all of which aim to influence students' education, development, and life outcomes positively. Health literacy is at the top of those initiatives, and many established health and educational stakeholders advocate for the implementation of health literacy within schools. Health literacy is salient in "narrowing the differential between rich and poor" (St. Leger, 2001, p. 197) and effective in establishing better health outcomes in children (Fleary et al., 2018). Findings from the World Health Organization (WHO) collaborative Health Behavior in School-age Children Survey supported the benefits of a school-wide approach to

health literacy. Improved health literacy impacts health outcomes and educational outcomes such as academic achievement and positive future outlook (Paakkari et al., 2019b). McDaid (2016) suggested that a strong overlap exists with the goals for students in schools and the goals of health literacy because "both wish to encourage the development of independent critical and well-informed thinking to help promote greater levels of personal development and empowerment" (p. 11).

Several definitions of healthy literacy together lay the foundation for people to gain the capacity to acquire and gain competencies to act on information that applies appropriately to their health. For example, Healthy People 2030, the Patient and Affordable Care Act, and the Calgary Charter highlighted the importance of obtaining, processing, using, and understanding basic health information to pursue healthy decision making (Association of University Centers on Disability [AUCD], 2010; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2021; Coleman et al., 2010). In 2010, the Patient and Affordable Care Act added "communication" as essential. The Calgary Charter of 2010 emphasized the necessary skills to achieve health literacy, and Healthy People 2030's addendum included the importance of viewing health literacy as a system issue that requires a public health perspective. At the 7th Global Conference on Health Promotion that the WHO and Kenya's Ministry of Public Health organized, health literacy was defined as "the cognitive and social skills which determine the motivation and ability of individuals to gain access to, understand, and use information in ways which promote and maintain good health" (WHO, 2010, p. 1). Similarly, Nutbeam (2000) described critical health literacy as using a combination of critical thinking and social skills to make better decisions and feel empowered to influence one's health.

The varied definitions provide a lens of how the field continues to advance toward the common shared goal of improving the quality of people's lives; "by improving people's access to health information and their capacity to use it effectively, health literacy is critical to empowerment" (WHO, 2010, p. 1). Collectively, health literacy definitions highlight that people require a complex group of reading, communicating, listening, critical thinking, and interaction skills to inform how they identify, evaluate, and use health information and make informed decisions. The ability to communicate needs and concerns, locate health information, evaluate and interpret the credibility and quality of sources, and weigh relative risks against benefits (National Library of Medicine, n.d.) requires that students have high literacy, research, critical thinking, and strong communication skills and more.

Health literacy is also highlighted as a tool to promote soft skills in students, such as independence, personal empowerment, and advocacy (Nutbeam, 2000). According to McDaid (2016), the skills necessary to implement in health literacy interventions are critical thinking, communication, processing and analysis of the accuracy and reliability of the information, and self-awareness to understand and respect the diversity of health perspectives in relation to someone's own perspectives.

A shared push for health literacy is present in schools across the nation because schools directly connect with children. St. Leger (2001) emphasized the important role schools play in facilitating health literacy among the youth as schools can use health literacy to meet public health goals and education commitments. The National Academy of Medicine (NAM) suggested that healthcare costs in the United States could be reduced by promoting health literacy during primary and secondary education years (Winkelman et al., 2016). Paakkari (2015) and Paakkari and Orkan (2019) reported that classroom instruction was ideal for health literacy, as this

instruction could help facilitate students' personal skills development and motivation for becoming health-literate.

Schools and education institutions that serve students during their early years play a critical role in acquiring health literacy skills (St. Leger, 2001). Similarly, Manganello (2008) reported that health literacy interventions starting at an early age could lead to greater understanding, better outcomes, and improved interaction with the healthcare system later in life. Schools are uniquely positioned to reach all children along their educational journey (Paakkari et al., 2019a).

Due to the profound impact that health literacy has on students, research has focused on how schools can meet educational commitments while focusing on health literacy (St. Leger, 2001). That focus has concentrated on implementing health literacy in schools through evidence-based frameworks, such as SEL (*Overview of SEL* 2013), health-promoting schools (Turunen et al., 2017), and Whole School, Whole Community, and Whole Child (Michael et al., 2015).

SEL Builds Competence for Health Literacy

Many tools are necessary to build student capacity and competency for health literacy. Currently, many of those competencies are being learned in schools through SEL programs. As part of socioemotional-focused activities, SEL uses positive youth development, which are programs geared toward "building young people's positive personal competencies, social skills and attitudes through increased positive relationships [and] social support" (Taylor et al., 2017, p. 1156) to facilitate broad and SEL-specific outcomes (Ura et al., 2020).

The roots of the study of emotional intelligence have a background beginning in the 1980s with Howard Gardner's book, *Frames of the Mind*: *The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. In this book, Gardner (1983) divided intelligence into eight modalities, some of which are

aligned with what is now understood as emotional intelligences. Seven years later, Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior" (p. 5). Later, the concept was popularized in 1995 by Daniel Goleman in his international bestselling book titled *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ?* (Schwabel, 2012), making the term "Emotional Intelligence" a household name.

Around the same time that Goleman was captivating consumers' hearts and minds worldwide, championing that life success can be achieved through social and emotional characteristics and qualities, SEL was gaining traction among professional organizations to shape educational guidelines and charter a path for its inclusion in American schools. The term SEL as a framework emerged from the Fetzer Institute conference held in 1994, where professionals convened, each with goals for students aligned with their background and expertise. The term SEL emerged as a set of competencies that could address the "developmental, psychological, educational, and general health needs of children" (Elbertson et al., 2010, p. 1017). In the same year, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2021), which Goleman cofounded, assumed the mission of making the evidence-based SEL curriculum a core part of children's educational experiences pre-K through Grade 12.

Consequently, SEL has become a well-researched construct used in schools across the United States to promote short- and long-term benefits in students' schools, careers, and personal lives. Social-emotional competence offers far-reaching benefits. McDaid (2016) noted that SEL programs "foster health literacy by strengthening self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship skills, as well as promoting responsible decision making" (p. 12).

SEL is not a curriculum in itself; it was created as a framework to coordinate the differential needs and address students' competencies and developmental abilities. SEL can be used as a stand-alone and guide to address students' holistic needs while being involved in various programming (CASEL, 2021). As a tool, SEL promotes awareness and growth that guide students "to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (*Overview of SEL*, 2013). Helping students with social-emotional competence can have profound effects on their health and well-being.

Support for SEL in Educational Institutions

SEL Funding

In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) passed into U.S. law, replacing the No Child Left Behind Act to emphasize that K-12 schools should use evidence-based approaches in school day interventions. The federal funding that came with ESSA is set aside for state educational agencies (SEA), local educational agencies (LEA), and schools to implement evidence-based or quality programming for students (Evidence-based interventions under the ESSA, 2021), with target outcomes that show at least one indicator of student success, organized under categories that reflect academic, vocation, college, and school community success (Grant et al., 2017; Hough et al., 2017). The language requirements of ESSA have been used to create a funding stream to place SEL into academic curricula, secure resources, support training, and create a culture that is conducive to SEL in the classroom and school-wide community (Grant et al., 2017, p. 1).

ESSA disbursed funds under several different categories and levels, referred to as titles and tiers, respectively. Under ESSA, there are nine titles for funding, three of which can be used

to pay for SEL implementations directly: Titles I, II, and IV. Many schools that wish to adopt evidence-based interventions that positively influence students' cognitive, affective, behavioral domains implement SEL interventions, as evidenced by widespread acceptance of SEL standards. Rather, each state determines SEL's level of importance in their curriculum and state standards (Grant et al., 2017). As of 2018, the National Conference of State Legislatures web page indicated that "Every state has comprehensive, free-standing standards for SEL with developmental benchmarks in preschool; however, just eight states have standards for SEL development for early elementary students and eight more expand their standards to K-12 grades" (Wallace, 2018, para. 10).

Under Title I, schools implementing SEL programming could use funds toward school-wide programs, targeted assistance programs, and school support (Grant et al., 2017, p. 10). Title I's funding stream allocated $62.5 billion to states between 2017 and 2020 to authorize spending "for programs aimed at improving educational opportunities" (p. ix). ESSA also allotted funds for teachers' professional development. Between 2017 and 2020, $11.1 billion in funding had been approved for training under Title II, which was to develop school leaders and educators (p. 12). Two grants that can be used under Title II are the (a) Supporting Effective Educator Development directed to the training of educators, and (b) School Leader Recruitment and Support for school leaders and administrators in developing the capacity for SEL interventions (pp. 12-13). Title IV includes two large grant programs to support students' comprehensive needs, focusing on community-wide engagement. Educational institutions can use competitive grants for school and out-of-school time interventions that meet students and community needs. Funding opportunities for school and student success are broadly defined to include academic

enrichment, 21st-century learning programs, school support programming, family engagement, and national activities (*Title IV-21st Century Schools*, 2020).

ESSA identified four tiers of funding from evidence-based and evidenced-informed interventions that have a strong rationale to support programming. Tier 1 is designed for strategies and approaches that have strong evidence with "well-designed and well-implemented randomized control experimental studies"; Tier 2 is for moderate evidence programs with "well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental studies"; and Tier 3 is to implement interventions with promising evidence based on "well-designed and well-implemented correlational studies." Tiers 1 to 3 require more substantive evidence, which can be found in reviews of existing high-quality research on successful programs (What Works Clearinghouse [WWC], n.d.). Tier 4 offers a great deal of flexibility for quality programming that is not backed by empirical research but supported by a strong rationale that has a "well-defined logic model or theory of action," with current research underway by a "SEA, LEA, or outside research organization" (California Department of Education, 2021). This tier is advantageous for schools looking to implement new programming that meets a community's local needs, particularly if they have a "strong rationale for believing that the intervention is likely to improve target outcomes" (Grant et al., 2017, p. x). Given that Tier 4 has additional expectations requiring that an evaluation of a program's effectiveness is currently underway, it may lead to resistance among the school community.

SEL Curriculum

Numerous diverse programs have been designed to promote social and emotional skills. A short list includes 4Rs (Reading, Writing, Respect, Resolution), Promoting Alternative

Thinking Strategies (PATHS), Open Circle, KooLKIDS Whole of Class, and EMOscope Intervention. CASEL, which is a leader in the field, has stated:

> SEL is a valuable component of education that facilitates children's cognitive abilities and prepares them to meet the challenges they will inevitably face in today's world. As a result of the expanding research base, SEL should now be considered a scientifically established, practical method that can improve the social, emotional, and academic performance of many preschool and elementary school students throughout the country. It deserves a prominent place in the education of all children. (p. 43)

CASEL provides a list of quality programming for schools interested in incorporating SEL interventions into their curricula. CASEL's (2013) latest guidelines for inclusion in their list of programs in 2013 included the following criteria:

- Be well-designed classroom-based programs that systematically promote students' social and emotional competence, provide opportunities for practice, and offer multi-year programming.
- Deliver high-quality training and other implementation supports, including initial training and ongoing support to ensure sound implementation.
- Be evidence-based with at least one carefully conducted evaluation that documents positive impacts on student behavior and/or academic performance. (p. 9)

The 4Rs Program provides a series of multimedia interactive lessons to help students Pre-K through Grade 5 deal with conflict and emotional regulation while being assertive and understanding others' viewpoints. The program provides

> read-alouds, book talks, and sequential, interactive skills lessons to develop social and emotional skills related to understanding and managing feelings, listening and developing empathy, being assertive, solving conflict creatively and nonviolently, honoring diversity, and standing up to teasing and bullying. 4Rs is a grade-specific program available for students in prekindergarten through eighth grade. (p. 43)

The Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) classroom-based curriculum is for preschool children designed to "promotes peaceful conflict resolution, emotion regulation, empathy, and responsible decision making" (p. 53). PATHS covers 30 lessons over a school year focused on improving social-emotional competencies such as cognitive regulation, social problem behaviors, self-control, and emotional awareness. Teachers are supported in promoting

a positive classroom climate and training students to improve their social-emotional skills (Bierman et al., 2016; CASEL, 2013).

The Open Circle program is designed for students from kindergarten through 5th grade to promote cooperative school and classroom community, improve students' emotional regulation and empathy, "and [establish] positive relationships and effective approaches to problem solving within the classroom" (CASEL, 2013, p. 52).

The KooLKIDS Whole of Class program is an Australian curriculum utilizing an interactive multimedia approach. Throughout the 13 weekly sessions of teacher-facilitated classroom-based program modules, students between the ages of 8 and 12 work on the five core competencies of SEL (Carroll et al., 2020).

The EMOscope program includes once-a-week classroom-based intervention where teachers are trained to facilitate training to primary school students in individual and group activities. Students are taught self-awareness, emotion recognition, social and emotional understanding, and the causes and consequences of emotional responses. Students are given homework to reinforce learning. The program can be delivered over 5 weeks for 90 minutes each week (Papieska et al., 2019).

Outcomes of School-based SEL Interventions

The following studies provide robust evidence demonstrating how social-emotional competence aids in the improvement of health. The SEL research chosen was based on the following criteria: (a) it investigated the results of SEL implementation in schools, (b) the student population was within the primary school years of K-12, and (c) studies were done within the last decade.

The first among the studies to be reviewed was by Taylor et al. (2017), who examined the follow-up effects of a school-based universal SEL intervention at a minimum of 6 months post-intervention. Taylor et al.'s study was an extension of Durlak et al.'s (2011) study because it used Durlak et al.'s criteria to select articles for inclusion. Using a meta-analysis design approach, Taylor et al. selected 82 studies in which students engaged in structured group lessons that lasted 30 to 45 minutes. The studies were primarily classroom-based interventions, and the remaining studies incorporated SEL as part of their academic instructional approach, with the minority supplementing classroom intervention with school, community SEL-wide engagement. The studies included student populations between K-12, follow-up results collected at least 6 months post-intervention, and a control group to compare findings. Of the 97,406 students sampled from the 83 studies, 37.8% were from K-5, 5.1% from Grades 6-8, and 13.4% from Grades 9-12. Outcomes assessed students' "positive social and emotional assets." Self-reports were used to measure internalizing and externalizing behaviors, substance use, academic performance, and self-perceptions; school records included academic scores and disciplinary actions. Additional measures included structured tasks, interviews, asset questionnaires, and teacher reports. The analysis included evaluating the mean effect size at follow-up across seven categories of social and emotional assets. After the program ended, students who were enrolled in SEL interventions continued to show positive effects in all areas of social and emotional assets between 56 weeks to 195 weeks later (p. 1165). The program helped develop protective behavior regarding conduct issues and drug use.

Taylor et al. (2017) conducted further follow-up of students up to 18 years later and found other positive developmental outcomes. Particularly, "improving future social relationships, increasing high school graduation rates, college attendance, and reducing later

negative outcomes such as arrests in the presence of clinical disorders" were found (p. 1166). In other words, the enhancement of asset development through speech and debate approaches that share similarities to SEL can have health promotion and literacy preventative effects.

In a similar meta-analysis that Ura et al. (2020) conducted, 111 studies were reviewed, of which 83 were original SEL intervention studies. SEL programs included cognition, emotional, and behavioral skills that led to complex, broad, and multifaceted outcomes. Ura et al.'s study was an extension of Taylor et al.'s (2017) previous study as it used those criteria for determining inclusion in the study. As an extension of the previous study, Ura et al. further dissected the studies that Taylor et al. reviewed by using a coding method to identify more precisely which dependent variables simply fell under the operational definition for a specific SEL category versus which ones were directly measured in one of CASEL's five core competencies. In assessing whether SEL interventions produced SEL competencies, the researchers examined whether "the instruments used in SEL interventions follow up studies directly measure the SEL competencies targeted" (p. 77). The dependent variables (DV) regarded as broad outcomes were resilience, problem behavior, and school bonding. Prosocial behavior, also a DV, was placed under the SEL category, even though the behavior was not directly listed as one of CASEL's five competencies, accounting for 83 studies. The remaining 28 studies showed a match between a minimum of one of CASEL's five categories and the skill being taught.

Ura et al. (2020) found that most SEL intervention "follow-up studies do not measure across CASEL domains" (p. 79). In measurements of interventions, CASEL's SEL competencies are, in large part, not the skills that are measured. Rather, the findings revealed that broad outcomes impacting a student's health and well-being are measured. SEL competencies have overlapping constructs, and many SEL outcomes are "comprised of multiple skills that have a

developmental hierarchy" (p. 79). Because of the multifaceted nature of SEL student outcomes, practitioners might opt to use the multiple informants, types, and instruments found in Ura et al. to measure the broad needs that exist within their school communities.

Boncu et al. (2017) also used a meta-analysis approach to examine the impacts that SEL interventions had on internalizing, externalizing, and prosocial behaviors, along with social and emotional skills and youth perceptions. The researchers conducted a meta-analysis of 37 studies through 2015. The various studies measured skills, attitudes, and behaviors and evaluated socioemotional, interpersonal, problem solving, conflict resolution, and decision-making skills, among other variables. Attitudes toward self and others included indicators of self-perception, school-community connectedness, prosocial attitudes, and substance use beliefs. Behaviors used measures to examine internalizing and externalizing behaviors. The results showed that SEL interventions were effective in reducing externalizing behaviors and increasing social and emotional skills. When comparing various age groups, the group that fared the best were students between the ages of 7 and 12, compared to those between 3 through 6 and 13 through 18 years of age. Internalizing behavior, however, did not produce significant results.

Intervention studies also found favorable results. For example, Carroll et al. (2020) examined the effectiveness of an established universal SEL intervention called KOOL Kids, a classroom-based program in Australia administered to children between the ages of 8 and 12 by their teacher. The sample was based on the population of Catholic schools, which make up 19.7% of school-aged students in Australia. Participants were drawn from 21 classrooms across six Catholic education schools among those who had previously expressed an interest in participating. The final sample consisted of 545 participants, of which 46% were male. Before the program's implementation, teachers received a full-day training curriculum with fully

scripted interventions, and the school community received consent forms. Overall, teachers rated the training as satisfactory, yielding a mean score of 4.4 of 5 (p. 204).

The SEL interventions addressed the five core SEL competencies covered over 13 weekly sessions. The 12 weeks of course content addressed all five core SEL competencies broken down into four modules. Each module represented a different letter in the acronym KOOL: K for know yourself, O for our needs and emotions, O for others' needs and emotions, and L for live well with others (Carroll et al., 2020, p. 202). Students watched videos of an animated character named Okki the Octopus and followed him as he navigated through social and behavioral challenges that required emotional regulation. In addition to the interactive multimedia, the teacher-led training included various independent and collaborative activities that involved role-playing, calming exercises, behavior challenges, reading, writing, and drawing exercises. The small group activities were rooted in the therapeutic frameworks of cognitive-behavioral therapy, solution-focused therapy, and strength-based approaches (p. 203). The final session was a review and wrap-up session.

To measure the program's effectiveness, students completed a 25-item three-point Likert-type Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to evaluate internalizing, externalizing, and prosocial behaviors across three subscales. Teacher satisfaction was also assessed as an important factor when considering teachers' buy-in to implement the program with fidelity. All teachers completed a one-item Likert question on their satisfaction, which was used as a covariate in the analysis. A hierarchical linear model was used to evaluate the predictors of social and emotional behavioral competence. Pre-program scores on emotional and behavioral skills significantly predicted increases in SEL. Regarding relationship skills, all students who participated in the program fared better than the control group.

All students in the program benefited from increases in relationship skills. The pre- and post-scores on emotional and behavioral regulation showed the starkest differences. Those students with the lowest scores in those areas showed the greatest improvement, which the researchers admitted might have resulted from regression to the mean effects, which is common when samples begin with extreme scores. Despite those possible explanations for the significant increases in SEL, other studies corroborated Carroll et al. (2020).

Consistent with previous findings, Papieska et al. (2019) found improvements in students' emotional and behavioral problems. Using a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the effectiveness of the EMOscope intervention administered to a sample of 339 Grade 3 students from Poland, Papieska et al. expected that social awareness and understanding would increase cooperative prosocial behaviors. Sixteen classes of Grade 3 students were recruited from eight Polish primary schools, and they were then separated into an experimental (n = 180) and a control group (n = 159).

The teaching samples were all female, ranging from freshman-level teachers with less than 10 years of experience to seasoned teachers with more than 25 years of experience. Of the 16 teachers, only three could be categorized as freshman teachers. The remaining were mid- to seasoned-level educators. All teachers attended a 3-hour workshop on EMOscope, after which their self-selection determined who would be in the experimental or the control group. The training was carried out during five weekly 90-minute sessions that included nine activities used in each session focused on three main themes: "experiencing emotions, recognizing emotions in self and others, and reflecting on the causes and consequences of emotions" (Papieska et al., 2019, p. 101). Students worked on individual and group activities where they had to write, speak,

listen, and reflect while engaged in various active learning activities, i.e., roleplaying, board games.

The study began in November of the school year when pretests were collected from the parents, followed by the interventions in February and March and posttest results obtained in April. Teachers rated the curriculum and teacher preparedness favorably using the Teacher Attitudes toward Social and Emotional Learning inventory. Researchers used a combination of performance-based tests, peer nominations, and questionnaires to examine the intervention's effects. The Levels of Emotional Awareness Scales for Children (LEP-C) was used for students who were 8 years and older to assess emotional awareness. Twelve real-life scenarios were used to assess how they would feel and how somebody else may feel experiencing a particular scenario. The Socioemotional Competence Domino Test (SoCoDoT) for children aged 8-12 assessed social and emotional understanding by having students fill in two storylines. To determine social understanding, students filled in sentences. They were asked to name emotions to examine emotional understanding, requiring them to use verbal and nonverbal cues to name emotions accurately. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was for students from 3-16 years old to measure prosocial and problem behavior and consisted of five subscales: emotional problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity-inattention, peer relationships, and prosocial behavior. The Peer Nominations of Cooperative Behavior measure was identified by having each student name three students they would rate as cooperative. Teachers rated the curriculum and teacher preparedness favorably using the Teacher Attitudes toward Social and Emotional Learning inventory.

The multilevel regression analysis results found that students exposed to the 5-week intervention showed improvements in emotional awareness of self and others, social

understanding, and reduction in behavioral problems, i.e., conduct problems and inattention/ hyperactivity. However, no effect was found in the prosocial behavior and peer interventions, and the researchers speculated that may have been because of the study's short duration.

Despite the different theoretical approaches of the studies, the main theme that can be identified among the interventions is that SEL produces a range of behaviors that span from specific SEL skills of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making to broad outcomes that impact students' overall individual, school, and community well-being.

SEL and Speech and Debate Share Similarities

Evidence-based SEL programs share similarities with speech and debate in their aim to improve students' socioemotional skills, which are skills deemed important in helping students gain health literacy. CASEL's definitions for SEL are echoed in the definitions offered by leaders in speech and debate as the virtues of the academic sport of debate. In its vision for every school to provide speech and debate, the NSDA envisions programming "to foster each student's communication, collaboration, [and] critical thinking [skills]" (para. 2). This notion is further emphasized by the Glenn Pelham Foundation, founded by Melissa Wade, a pioneer in the field that promotes debate "as a means to foster constructive dialogue, conflict resolution, critical thinking, literacy, and communication skills" (para. 1). Those sentiments were strengthened by the New York City Urban Debate League (NYCUDL, n.d.) in their view that "debate prepares students for 21st-century careers (debate teaches critical thinking and problem solving, research, communication, collaboration and creativity)" (para. 1).

When CASEL's social-emotional competencies are compared to the expectations of speech and debate that leading institutions offer, the common theme is that both social-emotional

competence and speech and debate foster collaboration, communication, conflict resolution, critical thinking, problem solving, and leadership. Additionally, when speech and debate students' anecdotes and testimonials, along with information from educators, are examined (Cridland-Hughes, 2016), the idea of perspective-taking and understanding diverse perspectives as they relate to social norms and history is repeated (CASEL 2013). For example, speech and debate share similarities with evidence-based SEL programs in their approach to improving interpersonal relationships and prosocial behaviors, leading to measurable and potentially long-lasting benefits to students' personal and community health.

Speech and debate promotes social relationships, which are essential in developing social-emotional learning and reducing associated health problems. Piko et al. (2016) found that social relations problems were associated with psychiatric health complaints in participants. The need to belong, loneliness, shyness, and competitiveness were all positive predictors of psychosomatic symptoms. Skills are enhanced not only by social and behavioral functioning but by cognitive development. Cognitive regulation is an important feature of SEL and a key feature of speech and debate, including a specific subset of executive functions such as cognitive flexibility, working memory, and inhibition control. Those skills provide opportunities to manage relationships, resolve conflicts, problem solve, and adapt to various situations (McClelland et al., 2017, p. 34).

Interpersonal, nonverbal skills such as eye gaze are salient in maintaining interpersonal communication (Jokinen, 2009). According to Michalska et al. (2017), fear triggers eye gaze avoidance, and averting eye gaze may momentarily help reduce anxiety. This suggests that students may use avoidance to reduce anxiety. However, avoidance only momentarily quells the

symptoms as ongoing avoidance perpetuates ongoing anxiety. Gazing at others is crucial for social learning and interaction.

In speech and debate, gazing behaviors can be seen in students' demonstration of perceptual dominance and their ability to adapt to the rounds. Whether or not students are uncomfortable looking at their opponents or judges, the learning necessary to read their opponents' emotions and adapt to judge preference requires gazing. Reducing gaze patterns may lead to lost opportunities for the observer to learn social cues and gain social-emotional competence; according to Michalska et al. (2017), it may help maintain anxious behavior in the long term.

Also, aversions of gaze in childhood continue to present in adults. Furthermore, based on Erozkan's (2014) findings, the importance of social self-efficacy cannot be underestimated, as high school students who do not feel they have skills in this area are likely to avoid social situations altogether. In contrast, the reverse is true for those who are socially assertive and confident in their interactions, and who welcome interpersonal communication. Thus, avoidance may lead to lost opportunities for learning social cues and gaining social-emotional competence. Many speech and debate activities, such as tournament participation, practice sparring sessions, and group topic discussions, clearly oppose avoidance.

To achieve social competence, SEL programs focus on helping students understand and recognize their own emotions, make appropriate decisions, demonstrate empathy, and manage relationships. Similarly, speech and debate program interventions do just that, as they provide students with an opportunity to engage in various activities in which they collaborate and are encouraged to develop healthy working relationships. Research has indicated debate training improves interpersonal communication skills (Glenn Pelham Foundation, n.d.). Speech and

debate foster social engagement, relationship building, and teamwork through collaborative class activities and camaraderie that emerges among teams during competitions. Through role playing, discussing resolutions, and practicing speaker roles, students have many opportunities to practice and improve on their interpersonal skills. Winkler (2007) found that participation in a computer-assisted debate project resulted in improved interpersonal skills among at-risk middle school students from Atlanta. The collaborative and team-building activities in which students engage as part of speech and debate can help them develop and increase their relationship skills.

> Many consider prosocial behaviors as an essential part of SEL because
>
> prosocial behaviors require the student to exhibit the ability to engage and be receptive to relationships with school personnel and peers (relationship skills) and understand and manage their emotions (self-awareness and self-management, respectively) to make social overtures that account for the perspectives of others (social awareness). (Ura et al., 2020, p. 18)

Curriculum such as speech and debate bolster students' competencies in the domains of prosocial behavior. The learning environment that is fostered in debate promotes prosocial behavior (Bauschard, 2000). The prosocial behaviors improved as a result of speech and debate impact students' mental health. Parents, educators, and psychologists have acknowledged the importance of prosocial behavior in the current well-being and later life development of adolescents (Knight et al., 2015). Prosocial children also had better peer relations and were more popular than other groups of students.

To understand the positive health outcomes among prosocial students, Brown and Brown (2015) explained neurophysiological mechanisms that may help illuminate the link between prosocial behaviors and health. The mammalian neurohormonal systems that help parents bond with their newborns may have evolved to extend to prosocial behaviors when interacting with others. Those prosocial behaviors are preceded by feelings of motivation regulated by the

hypothalamus that interacts with oxytocin and progesterone, two neuromodulators known to have stress-reducing and restorative properties.

Additionally, Raposa et al. (2016) found that pro-sociality moderated the effects of negative affect and mental health. Subjects were asked to maintain a log of prosocial activities they engaged in and positive effects and negative effects over 2 weeks. Pro-sociality was found to be significantly associated with mental health. Subjects who engage in prosocial behavior reported more positive effects, and those who engaged in more prosocial activities had fewer reports of negative effects.

Similar to speech and debate, SEL is rooted in active learning theories. Speech and debate interventions and strategies are compatible with the broad asset development and environmental enhancement orientation of SEL. They both share a common focus on exposing students to social-based skills training opportunities that strengthen youth assets across family, peer, school, and community environments.

Speech and Debate Lost Its Prominence

Contemporary Speech and Debate History

In the 21st century, "speech and debate" collectively refers to individual speaking and debate team events, and together they fall under the heading of forensics. Speech and debate are ubiquitous, having been around since the beginning of time. Forensics, "derived from the Latin term for ensis and closely related to forum" (American Forensic Association, 2020), has been influenced by a rich history of language communication from the start of civilization. As coined in Aristotle's *On Rhetoric*, forensic rhetoric is the study and practice of public speaking and debate, initially focused on argumentation and evidence for legal proceedings (Kennedy, 1991). Aristotle separated rhetoric into three genres, with a focus on oratorical public displays. The first

genre is deliberative, a political act related to decision-making; the second is forensic, a judicial aim of defending or prosecuting; and the third is epideictic, ceremonial oratory with the intent of offering praise or blame. The form of evidence described by Aristotle is *enthymeme*, which is the strongest proof offered through syllogism (Rapp, 2010, para. 14), a logical argument that involves deductive reasoning, and *paradeigma*, a secondary but adequate proof, which can be illustrated through an example (para. 21).

Similarly, in speech and debate, students use those forms of evidence to establish and support their warrants, which are data used to support a claim (Vanderbilt University, n.d.). Among all various forms and styles of communication training, speech and debate found in forensics is the most comprehensive. School and college speech and debate contests are patterned after ancient Greek competitions at public forums, thus sharing many rhetorical elements (American Forensic Association, 2020, para. 1).

Speech and debate competitions can follow a variety of forms. The NSDA reported that there are 18 speech and debate events at the middle school level: commentary, declamation, dramatic interpretation, duo interpretation, expository, humorous interpretation, impromptu, informative speaking, international extemporaneous speaking, mixed extemporaneous speaking, original oratory, original spoken word poetry, poetry, pro-con challenge, program oral interpretation, prose, storytelling, and United States extemporaneous speaking. The debate events include big questions, congressional, extemporaneous, Lincoln-Douglas, policy, public forum, and world schools (NSDA, n.d.a).

On the middle-school level, public forum debate and extemporaneous speech are widely listed on Tabroom, a tournament management system for speech and debate competitors worldwide. Public forum is a common form of middle school and high school debate

competition in the United States. Topic choices are posted by the NSADA, giving the speech community a window frame to vote on a resolution. New resolutions are voted on every few months (NSDA, n.d.a).

In public forums, students give 3- to 4-minute speeches that advocate or reject a position interspersed with crossfire questions, where opposing teams can direct numerous questions toward each other (NSDA, 2019). At public forum debate competitions, two students or separate sets of teams prepare to argue different sides of an issue, regardless of how they may feel about it. In each round, sides are either locked, or students have to flip a coin to select a position for which team speaks first in the round, either pro or con. For instance, students might have to debate whether urbanization in West Africa is beneficial. In another competition, they could debate whether the benefits of creating the United States Space Force outweigh the harms.

Extemporaneous speech is an individual event where students stay abreast of domestic and international relations by reading editorials, for example in the *Economist*, *Foreign Affairs* magazine, and other outlets that provide a broad range of political and international news. Extemporaneous tournaments follow a traditional breakdown of domestic, foreign, and economic questions. As with any current event speech and debate challenge, "students will practice identifying the arguments in an article and integrating them into speeches" (Phipps et al., n.d., p. 78). During each round, each student draws a new question that is relevant to the current geopolitical climate, then are given 30 minutes to prepare a 7-minute speech to the question, without the aid of any notes. As individuals or teams present their respective points, judges evaluate the arguments in public forum debate or extemporaneous speech. The level of current event challenge opportunities offered through extemporaneous help students develop evidence and evaluation skills (p. 78).

The interscholastic individual or team-speaking performing or debating events offered to primary or secondary school students can be learned as part of a school program within classes throughout the day or extracurricular activities organized by schools as part of out-of-school hours. The events not run by the school are held by leagues, clubs, and organizations in the afternoon or on the weekend. During speech and debate course sessions, students learn geopolitical content and practice speech delivery, the mechanics of the rounds, and strategies to improve their performance.

While training in speech and debate, students prepare for competition to win tournament rounds by using appeals and forms of evidence to persuade. "Aristotle defined the rhetorician as someone who is always able to see what is persuasive" (Rapp, 2010, para. 11), and so debaters' use of such tools as rhetorical appeals and forms of evidence is foundational to persuade. The goal of the rounds is to win the judges' ballot vote—the form on which the judges comment on what factors the debaters used to adjudicate the round. The two primary distinctions that determine how judges evaluate the rounds are experience and style of debate. Judges comment on various speakers' performances, including rhetoric, oratory, argumentation, teamwork, and knowledge (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2020).

To this end, leading up to competitions, students spend many more hours outside of class practicing (Mirra et al., 2016). Most preparation time involves developing arguments and the objections that opponents may offer. As explained in *The Craft of Research* by Booth et al. (1995), people often anticipate others' objections to their arguments. Because of this, many will prepare rebuttals to those arguments before they have stated their conclusions. These are known as "qualifications" to their warrants—warrants being information that connects claims to the evidence that is being presented. It is possible to anticipate the objections that people might

make. Before presenting that information, it is sometimes helpful to develop rebuttals that would counter these objections. Other times, there may be objections that one will be unable to rebut. In these cases, it may be necessary to concede the point by allowing that the objection may have some validity and explaining how one's arguments better tie into the solvency. If one's arguments apply in some cases but not others, it will be necessary to stipulate the conditions in which one's conclusion is valid and which conditions may invalidate the arguments. Overall, much coursework and preliminary competition preparation hours are poured into speech and debate (Mirra et al., 2016).

Speech and Debate Curriculum

In the way of curricula, speech and debate does not offer much, making it a specialized sport that is not accessible for all, particularly at the elementary and middle school level. One curriculum is Word Generation. Recognized by What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), Word Generation is a classroom-based curriculum developed by Snow in collaboration with the Boston Public Schools and the Strategic Education Research Partnership for upper-level elementary and middle-school students to improve reading comprehension using debate and discussion (WWC, April 2020). The series consists of interdisciplinary units on high-interest topics that include debate prompts, parceled with activities to support vocabulary, writing, and discussion. It is separated into different series, with each series spanning 24 weekly units to be carried out over an academic calendar year. Units can be delivered in any order, as they do not build on themselves (WWC, April 2020).

While the program is evidence-based and found to be effective in improving reading comprehension and vocabulary development, the research supporting its efficacy listed in the WWC intervention report (April 2020) has not centered on the activity of debate itself. Word

Generation does not offer the current topical resolutions in the way that speech and debate tournaments do. Having students cover policy, health, education, and other world issues relevant to the modern-day landscape and issues affecting communities worldwide is valuable. As students stay abreast of current knowledge of broad societal issues, norms, cultural perspectives, and the various living conditions and concerns of people worldwide, this knowledge informs their worldviews and subsequent decisions (Billings, 2011). According to former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, "It's so important that our youth increase their global competencies and become globally-aware citizens in the 21st century—and debate is one fantastic means of doing so" (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2012).

This awareness may bolster the argument that discussion-focused activities can passively build skills. However, researchers examining a curriculum from a lens devoid of speech and debate-focused activities such as argumentation, research, and sparring rounds, have placed more emphasis on the academic outcomes of discussion rather than the broad set of cognitive, social, and behavioral skills that speech and debate can cultivate.

Except for some research evaluating the effects of the Word Generation guide on speech and debate students (WWC, 2020), no other evidence-based curricula were identified in the field for elementary and middle school students. Instead, what exists are individual entities developing and aggregating information to be used as lessons and curricula. A general search on the World Wide Web leads to worksheets and guides that have not been vetted or examined for their reliability or validity, although they are approaches that stakeholders offer in the field of their practices. Independent education resource providers, coaches, and speech and debate associations like NSDA and NAUDL who are heavily involved in training and supporting

students in speech and debate have developed curriculum guides, handouts, handbooks, briefs, cases, and prepacked evidence.

Despite speech and debate's potential to cultivate many health literacy skills, they are unfortunately often relegated to an elective status as an enrichment activity. Evidence-based school approaches that aim to accomplish many health literacy goals are evident in SEL interventions. Other goals important to health literacy are civic awareness, academic literacy, and deep-level critical thinking, all of which are hallmarks of speech and debate.

Though not widely examined with evidence-based research, speech and debate can improve health literacy and promotion while simultaneously filling the SEL gaps. First, speech and debate approaches share elements of SEL, which have undergone rigorous examinations. Second, speech and debate directly builds the broader cognitive and historical lens students need to thrive in family, school, and community settings. Finally, speech and debate strengthens students in civic awareness, academic literacy, and critical thinking.

Speech and Debate Relegated to Supplemental Status

Despite the effort and rigor that accompany speech and debate, its presence and importance in the educational landscape have changed for the worse. Melissa Wade, a competitive nationally recognized ranked high school debater between 1964 and 1968, recounted that speech and communication were compulsory activities that led students in Texas to a single annual state tournament. In an age where Black and White students learned in segregated schools, those barriers were lifted for speech and debate at the culminating annual competition (Cridland-Hughes, 2016).

Speech and debate's position in the educational curriculum has steadily declined from the era commonly referred to as the "theory explosion" of the 1960s (Greenstreet, 1992) to become a

more specialized elective that only has a marginal resemblance to previous generations. Bellon (2000) noted that there has been a move in the forensic community to have speech and debate move outside of its limited boundaries of elective status or out of school time programming to "incorporate the skills and practice of debate in a broader range of [college] classroom setting" (p. 161). However, before that can be realized at any level of the educational system, reliable and valid research to support the myriad benefits of speech and debate is necessary. As Greenstreet noted back in 1992, only surveys and testimonials accounted for the evidence on the benefits of debate. What was needed was causal evidence. He noted, "measuring specific behaviors and abilities is the first step toward accountability" (p. 16). What he said more than three decades ago remains true today. Having such empirical evidence is a necessary first step in having evidence-based curricula to support the widespread intervention of speech and debate in schools across America. Bellon explained the importance of advocacy for those who are at the front lines, which he described as those "who have witnessed the power of debate to enhance learning and motivate students" (p. 1). Bellon charged them to produce strong evidence demonstrating debate's value. He further argued that debate can be used in just about any class to produce academic and social competencies. Bellon explained that students can fully explore scientific methods through debate by supporting their assertions with reasoned and substantive argumentation. In math courses, debate across the curriculum can help math students "translate their understanding of abstract formulas and theorems to resolve real-world problems" (p. 172). Through debate, students develop real-world skills that translate into full academic success and work to improve social skills simultaneously. "Debate-intensive instruction has the potential to improve human relationships in the larger community and in the classroom" (p. 175). Despite all these potential benefits to students' well-being and the impact debate can have on others in their

communities, there is a dearth of empirical research supporting speech and debate interventions for elementary and middle school students.

What currently exists is scant evidence with only a handful of scientific intervention studies showing associations between speech and debate, critical thinking, organization, and reflective thinking. Many of these were testimonials (Colbert et al., 1985; Gruner et al., 1971; Huseman et al., 1972). Even then, the focus was not on the elementary and middle school students, but rather the high school and college population.

Overall, general assumptions exist that speech and debate will improve public speaking and argumentation skills. The skills learned in speech and debate directly impact students' health literacy and, consequently, are many of the same skills evident in SEL, which plays a central part in a school's educational pedagogy. However, in the 21st century, little empirical evidence exists to support the notion that speech and debate is important in developing the specific oratory and argumentation or broad skills that can impact students' overall health and well-being.

In the same way that SEL has a school-wide ubiquity and presence, speech and debate, which already had a seat at the table and is a curriculum with which many educators are already familiar, could be more prominently positioned to grow students' health literacy competencies. Speech and debate is not being suggested as an intervention to supplant SEL but rather to coexist alongside SEL.

Aside from SEL competencies, the other skills that can be garnered through speech and debate while simultaneously meeting health literacy guidelines are civic education, critical thinking, and general academic literacy. The aims of speech and debate are shared among public health initiatives to improve people's health outcomes. Thus, the other tools necessary for health

literacy such as critical literacy, critical thinking, and academic achievement which are gained through speech and debate are next explored for how they positively impact health literacy.

The Connection Between Civic Literacy, Speech and Debate, and Health Literacy

Civic Literacy Promotes Health Literacy

Civic literacy is a tool to empower and engage citizens that has implications for people's health and well-being. In a democratic society, the civic literacy of its citizens is foundational (The Milton Public Library, 2020). More broadly, civic literacy is defined as the knowledge and awareness of public issues and governmental processes to exercise one's rights at different levels of society. The book *Advancing Health Literacy: A Framework for Understanding and Action* describes civic literacy as one of the four domains of health literacy (Zarcadoolas et al., 2009a). According to Zarcadoolas et al. (2009b), the public issues of civic literacy include "an awareness that individual health decisions can impact public health" (p. 197).

Freedman et al. (2009) defined public health literacy as "the degree to which individuals and groups can obtain, process, understand, evaluate, and act upon information needed to make public health decisions that benefit the community" (p. 448). The term *public health literacy* recognizes that as a natural aspect of their "environmental and social context," people can leverage the skills and tools of civic engagement to initiate change and positively impact public health (Gray, 2018, p. 2). Freedman et al. proposed properly addressing the health concerns of members of society, civic orientation, and engagement as a core to achieving health literacy.

Furthermore, as part of civic literacy, people need to use oral, verbal, and nonverbal social-communicative skills as vehicles to influence change. The National Health Education Standards (NHES), an accepted reference on health education (CDC, 2019), outlined eight school standards to be used through elementary and secondary school to achieve community

health. Of those eight, communication as an essential aspect of health promotion and advocacy is indicated in three standards to bridge the gap between health providers and community members. In Standards 2 and 4, the focus is on demonstrating interpersonal communication skills to promote health and analyzing the influence that interpersonal relationships have on someone's health behaviors. Standard 8 is concerned with having students develop advocacy skills to promote their personal, family, and community health (CDC, 2019).

An October 2017 report entitled "Civic Deserts: America's Civic Health Challenge" by Atwell et al. highlighted America's limited civic engagement opportunities. In the report, some key findings were that there had been no improvements in "American history education and civics education" (p. 6) since the 1990s, and Americans daily newspaper readership has declined along with "trust in all forms of news media" (p. 6). "Americans' participation in civic life is essential to sustaining our democratic form of government" (Winthrop, 2020, p. 1). This decline of civic engagement among Americans is concerning.

The lack of civic literacy and engagement provides a clear picture of civic awareness in the country. According to Shapiro and Brown (2018), only 26% of Americans can name all three government branches, and 23% of 9th graders performed at proficiency level or higher on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) civics exam. The scores of the U.S. Advanced Placement (AP) exam are also troubling. To earn credit for an AP exam, a score of 4.0 is necessary. However, students in all U.S. states, including the District of Columbia, failed to earn average scores of 4.0. The U.S. average was 2.6, evidence that we are not doing a stellar job of educating the majority.

The lack of civic engagement among youth with non-White low-income students showed that lower civic competencies (Pope & Cohen, 2011) is troubling. Voter participation rates are

poor, with 6% of states having 18- to 24-year-olds voting at an average of 50% and above, namely, Nebraska, Kentucky, and Virginia (Shapiro & Brown, 2018). Additionally, Pack-Jordan and Jordan (2017) argued that rural areas can be isolated from civic participation and awareness engagement because of limited opportunities, other people's negative perceptions of rural residents, and training in ways that fuel advocacy and civic interests. Regardless of the indicators used to evaluate civic literacy, awareness, and participation in the United States, the overall message is that we have a growing problem that can affect our citizens' health and well-being.

Speech and Debate Promotes Civic Literacy

Whose job is it to facilitate and support civic literacy in students? The answer may be found in speech and debate programming (Rubin et al., 2009). Pack-Jordan and Jordan (2017) explained that competitive debate can be responsive to the marginalization of students in rural schools across America because it promotes civic content mastery, critical thinking, and acculturation into norms and expectations. Consequently, expanding access to debate is an appropriate and crucial intervention for students across America. Given the amount of time that students spend in school and the years of required compulsory education, the easiest place to reach students is through their schools. High-quality civics education can positively influence civics behavior because civics education promotes informed and engaged students (Shapiro & Brown, 2018, p. 2). A full civic education provides a full curriculum, including a comparison of government forms, public participation, and constitution (Shapiro & Brown, 2018), which is core to any speech and debate curriculum. Pack-Jordan and Jordan (2017) explained that "debate allows for open conversation, provides direct instruction toward the mastery of civic knowledge and serves as a catalyst for authentic experiences that engage this knowledge set in acts of civic engagement" (p. 16). Hlavacik et al. (2016) highlighted the connection between debate and civic

outreach activity among college students. They surveyed 402 college debate coaches with 11 or more years of coaching and found that as debate programs increase in size, so does the amount of civic outreach in which they engage. The larger the debate team and the more coaches and support students have, the more the civic engagement.

The association between speech and debate and civic engagement was confirmed in a large prospective study examining school records of Urban Debate League students in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) between 1997 and 2007. Anderson and Mezuk (2015) investigated whether indicators of school engagement that included civic engagement mediated the relationship between debate participation and academic performance using data from the "Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) at the University of Chicago" (p. 364). Anderson and Mezuk reviewed the school records of more than 12,000 students from 116 schools in the CPS system.

The sample consisted of 12,179 students who were enrolled in CPS. Of the 12,179 students, 2,449 were marked as debaters. Anderson and Mezuk (2015) used debate participation as the independent variable; school engagement as mediators and academic outcomes were the dependent variables. Students met the criteria for debate if they had attended at least one debate tournament between the school years of 1997-1998 through 2006-2007. Anderson and Mezuk also examined the intensity of participation, which was determined by the number of tournaments and students' win/loss records over the years. The CPS/CSSR 5 Essentials school survey was administered to students in the fall and spring of each year to assess engagement. The assessment used a 5-point Likert scale to assess students on "civic commitment, social competence, social conscience, student-teachers trust, and educational expectations" (p. 365). Academic outcomes were measured as high school graduation and American College Test

(ACT) scores. High school completion was analyzed as a dichotomous variable, segmented into students who graduated from CPS and all others were entered as dropouts, which included transfer students who were no longer part of the CPS system. Anderson and Mezuk also used the following five measures as a risk index to calculate students' at-risk status: free lunch status, special education status, neighborhood poverty, 8th grade math scores, and 8th grade reading scores.

The researchers used three different analyses to examine results. Using linear regression, demographic variables and risk index were used to make statistical adjustments among debaters and non-debaters when comparing the impact of engagement. Mediation analysis was used to assess the direct effects of debate and school completion and the indirect, mediating effect of engagement. Lastly, multivariable logistic regression was used to examine the relationship between debate participation and the combined impact of engagement and academic success. The findings clearly demonstrated the powerful effects of participation in an Urban Debate League. Regarding the importance of debate on civic literacy, the results were clear that debaters had greater engagement than non-debaters in social, civic, and school areas. Also significant among the findings was that debate led to graduation through the mediating effects of engagement.

The Connection Between Critical Thinking, Speech and Debate, and Health Literacy and Promotion

Critical Thinking Promotes Health Literacy

Critical thinking, a cognitive skill with far-reaching health benefits, can be improved through speech and debate. Critical thinking is a core academic skill that is heralded as a crowning education achievement. The educational benefits of critical thinking are indisputable,

and its impact on people's lives is not contained to professional and personal pursuits but also directly apply to health and well-being.

Critical thinking is a major component of health literacy (Nutbeam, 2000). Critical thinking is "thinking that assesses itself" (Center for Critical Thinking, 1996) and requires that people engage in reflective thinking to help guide decision making and (van Zyl et al., 2020) to use those skills to evaluate the credibility of the evidence. Critical literacy, a core component of health literacy, means having "more advanced cognitive skills which, together with social skills, can be applied to critically analyse information, and to use this information to exert greater control over life events and situations" (Nutbeam, 2000, p. 264). The premise is further reinforced by Ishikawa et al. (2008), who recounted the work of Nutbeam (2000) in proposing a model of health literacy that involves "critically analyzing information and using the information to exert greater control over life events and situation" (Ishikawa et al., 2008, p. 874). The analytic thought required to engage in critical thinking is reinforced in at least two of the eight NHES Standards of health. Standard 2 speaks of analyzing the influence the broader community has on a person's health behaviors. Standard 3 speaks of the ability of students to access credible information.

As it relates to health, Mahadevan and Sonawane (2019) found that core life skills, one of which was critical thinking, were positively related to mental health in a study of 275 adolescents between 14 and 17 years of age. Mahadevan and Sonawane recruited students from a chain of central government schools in India called Kendriya Vidyalayas using a purposive sample. Life skills were assessed using the Life Skills Assessment Questionnaire (LSAQ), a 63-question, 5-point Likert scale that examined self-awareness, interpersonal communication, empathy, decision making, problem solving, critical thinking, and coping with stress. Mental health was

measured through the Positive Mental Health Inventory (PMHI), a 36-question inventory separated into three subscales, each containing 12 questions to examine self-acceptance, ego strength, and life philosophies. The statistical tool to measure the association between life skills and mental health was Spearman's correlation coefficient. A positive correlation was found between life skills and mental health. With a correlation coefficient of $r = .222$, $p < .05$, the association between life skills that included critical thinking and mental health was especially significant in adolescent boys. According to Mahadevan and Sonawane, critical thinking gives students a set of foundational skills that help cultivate "positive health, such as acquiring the ability to reduce special health risks and adopt healthy behavior" (pp. 1191-1192). In turn, critical thinking can have a far-reaching impact in areas that improve life satisfaction.

Similalry, Kargar et al. (2013) investigated the effect of creative and critical thinking on adolescents' general health. Forty male students in Grade 6 at a single school were recruited through random cluster sampling and then randomly assigned to control or experimental groups. Students in the experimental group received 20 hours of critical thinking and creativity instruction over 10 weeks. Each 2-hour session was didactic, "with practice and role play, and homework in the end" (p. 466). The measures used to assess critical thinking and creativity were the California Critical Thinking Skills Test, Form B, and the Abedi-Schumacher Creativity Test, where participants self-reported their abilities. To assess adolescent health, the researchers administered the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28) consisting of four subscales in which students self-reported somatic symptoms, anxiety, insomnia, social dysfunction, and severe depression. After using MANCOVA to analyze the results, the researchers found that creative and critical thinking skills training benefitted students' general health.

Radanielina Hita et al. (2018) were interested in understanding the type of parental discussion which dissuades students from falling prey to social media advertisements glorifying alcohol. Specifically, they were interested in seeing whether certain discussion would "decrease the negative effects that youth behavior with alcohol brands on social media may have on attitudes toward alcohol through its effects on critical thinking" (p. 98). The study was retrospective; participants were asked to think back to earlier life conversations with their parents. Of the 658 undergraduate students from Northwestern University, 72.2% were Caucasian and 67.9% were female; the mean age was 19.49, with 82.6% between 18 and 21 years of age. Students participated in the survey at three different points over the fall term.

Radanielina Hita et al. (2018) assessed critical attitudes toward mediated messages through statements such as "I look for information before I believe something I see on television" (p. 103). Students who had parents who critiqued media messages were put in the category of "negative parental mediation" (p. 101). They had parents explain and discuss the motives behind advertisements with their children. Results showed the power of critical thinking associated with negative parent mediation. Despite having students bombarded with social media portraying erroneous or misleading information about alcohol, parental critiquing of media messages was protective. Survey reports showed that those exposed to parents who engaged in negative parental mediation used better judgment and critical thinking, thereby decreasing the students' likelihood of engaging with alcohol brands. These students were less likely to identify with the digital portrayals. Thus, the development of critical thinking skills reduced consumption, positive expectations, and identification with alcohol.

Speech and Debate Promotes Critical Thinking

A growing body of research has suggested the benefits that speech and debate have on critical thinking skills. Wade (1995) identified eight characteristics of critical thinking:

> Critical thinking involves the ability to (a) ask questions and be willing to wonder, (b) define problems clearly, (c) examine evidence, (d) analyze assumptions and biases, (e) avoid emotional reasoning, (f) avoid oversimplification, (g) consider alternative interpretations, and (h) tolerate uncertainty. (p. 25)

All of these are skills are fostered in debate as students organize speeches, examine opponents' evidence, prepare refutations to their arguments, and research for logical and credible sources. Many student debaters have explained debate as crucial in their development of critical thinking skills (Mirra et al., 2016), making it clear that there is an association between argumentation found in debate and logical thought, problem solving, questioning, and reasoning that undergirds critical thinking.

Countless examples can shine a lens on the impact of speech and debate on people's critical thinking and their sense of empowerment. To understand the magnitude of those possibilities, one can merely look at how prison inmates react to speech and debate training. Through a prison debate initiative established through a partnership with the Idaho Department of Corrections and Boise State University, the direct effects of communication competency and critical thinking were seen through debate. Throughout a 24-week training, 25-30 inmates participated in debate training facilitated by debate student volunteers from the university. The benefits of community engagement were reciprocal. Students learned how to facilitate accessibility and inclusivity. Student volunteers learned how communication competency and critical thinking could be achieved with a layman population by avoiding debate jargon while

teaching (Arellano, 2017). Arellano (2017) explained the intent was "to teach critical thinking as an alternative form of dispute resolution and to teach each inmate how to advocate for their own interests and needs" (p. 7).

Using a multivariate approach, Huseman et al. (1972) examined the relationship between debate and critical thinking, organization, and reflective thinking. The research included 206 students from 24 different states who participated in a summer high school debate workshop at the University of Georgia. On the first day of the workshops, all students took the Watson-Glaser tests for critical thinking, the Goyer Organization of Idea Test, and the Alma Johnson Sarett test for reflective thinking. In preparation for the culminating tournament, students spent 2 weeks engaged in debate training and drills, including case writing, sparring sessions, and research. Students were evaluated by five different judges who would rank them from 1 to 4 to place them in quartiles during the tournaments. Rank 1 was the highest, and 4 was the lowest. The average test scores were calculated for each quartile. As the rankings increased from 1 to 4, so did the groups' average score for each test. The results of reflective thinking at .783, critical thinking at .733, and organization at .725 showed there was a correlation between debate ranking and skills.

To further ascertain and understand the findings, Huseman et al. (1972) included the variable of debate experience, where the "experienced" versus the "inexperienced" were segmented based on 1 year of experience. The highest predictive quality was found in the results of the tests on organization at .770, followed by reflective thinking at .764, and then critical thinking at .686. The scores indicated that a positive relationship can be found among debate experience and the measured competencies.

The Connection Between Academic Achievement, Speech and Debate, and Health Literacy

Academic Achievement Promotes Health Literacy

Education is one of the most compelling social determinants of health, as it is modifiable and has long-term impacts across a person's life span (Healthy People 2030, n.d.). A nationally representative study demonstrated a connection between education and health literacy in that nearly half of the adult participants who had not obtained a high school degree had low health literacy (Kutner et al., 2006). Basch (2011) found that health issues affected academic achievement and presented "evidence-based approaches that schools can implement to address these problems" (p. 593). Given that a bidirectional relationship seems to exist between health literacy and education, and schools can address many factors that contribute to the poor health literacy of adults (Marks, 2012), a significant need was demonstrated to promote health literacy standards in schools as a tool to reduce the academic achievement gap and simultaneously improve students' overall health and well-being.

However, more than a decade later, literacy rates have not improved. The literacy rates of U.S. communities have been well documented, with recent estimates showing that approximately one in five adults (21%) have low literacy skills (New York Population 2020, n.d.). The trend toward low academic literacy is not abating as two-thirds of 4th graders in the United States are reading below grade level. This problem persists from childhood to young adulthood, as the same percentage of high school students graduate reading below a 4th-grade proficiency (Rea, 2020). Among the states with the lowest literacy rates, New York is second at 77.9%, one percentage point away from California, with illiteracy rates of 76.9% (Rea, 2020).

Bradley and Greene (2013) examined the impact of academic achievement on the following six known health risk behaviors: "tobacco use, substance use, high risk sexual

behavior, dangerous risk-taking behaviors, unhealthy dietary behaviors and physical inactivity" (p. 524). Included in the sample were 122 studies from the United States and Canada. The articles drawn for analysis were published between 1985 and 2011, with each study including a minimum sample of 100 students between the ages of 6 and 18. Academic achievement looked at "grade point average, academic grades, standardized test scores, school completion level, high school competition, and grade level retention" (p. 524). The results showed a statistically significant inverse relationship between health risk behavior and academic achievement. However, health behaviors are interrelated, and academic achievement can mitigate adverse behaviors (Healthy People 2030., n.d.).

The long-term impacts of improving children's literacy are far-reaching and long-term (Healthy People 2030, n.d.). The primary school years are advantageous in shaping students' learning and influencing their learning outcomes later (Bakken et al., 2017). A study in 2010 by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that poor reading proficiency at 3rd grade and concentrated poverty were negatively correlated with high school graduation rates (Fiester, 2010). For each graduating high school student, there is a lifetime income benefit of $367,687 (Taylor et al., 2017). Reports showed that low health literacy rates are directly correlated with poverty (Kutner et al., 2006).

Health literacy is necessary for quality of life and "depends in part, on one's past education" or the education of those around them (Marks, 2012, p. 21). Turunen et al. (2017) indicated that a conservative approach to improving students' health was on teaching narrowly focused topics such as disease and health behavior. As early as the 1980s in the introduction of Health Promoting Schools, the medical community acknowledged a need for contemporary and expansive goals. Thus, the goals of Health Promoting Schools are to teach health literacy as a

means of promoting health and well-being by enabling students to "acquire competencies to create more control over their own health and over their environment" (p. 177). The educational competencies for health literacy include print, oral, and numerical literacy, described, respectively, as being able to write and read, listen and speak, and use and interpret mathematical information to inform decision making (Marks, 2012). Using many data points for reference, Marks (2012) compiled a list of contributory causes of poor literacy, identifying areas in which schools are implicated, i.e., "low formal education levels," "low literacy levels," "undeveloped reading, oral and numeracy skills" (p. 23).

Health literacy not only impacts individuals, but also their intimate and larger community in the sharing of information and advocacy for self or on behalf of others. Thus, the definition of health literacy has shifted from an individual to a social level as health professionals have noted that poor functional literacy of our adult populations directly impacts those around them (Marks, 2012). Whether low or high literate, adults in any given community are parents and community members who care for and play a critical role in educating children. Thus, if schools do not take up the mantle in a substantive way, students' chances of growing into health-literate adults are poor (Marks, 2012). Schools can reach every age and grade level, making schools the best venue to prepare students to become health-literate (Paakkari et al., 2019a).

Speech and Debate Promotes Academic Achievement

The academic and vocabulary gains developed from debate-led class activities are indisputable (Snow, 2014). "Participating in competitive debate among high school students is associated with significant gains in cumulative grade point average" (Glenn Pelham Foundation, n.d.). In a speech at the NAUDL, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said, "To be very

clear, the experience of competing on an urban debate team boosts your college readiness—and your chance to succeed in life" (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Studies across the country have found that high school debate improves reading ability, grades, school attendance, self-esteem, and interest in school (Duffin, 2005). Argumentation and public speaking skills are educational benefits that students at all levels of debate value (Hiland, 2017), and debaters rank improved oral communication skills as a main benefit of debate. Classroom discussion and debate have long been used to help students articulate their ideas and refine their thinking on a topic. Through speech and debate, structured conversations are encouraged, so students consistently improve oral communication skills through class activities, competitions, and more. In a sample of 47 at-risk middle school students who completed 6th grade, Jones and Procopio (2017) found a connection between communication apprehension and student ability, showing that high-achieving students demonstrated low communication apprehension, whereas the inverse was true for at-risk or low-achieving students. Additionally, debaters often experience debate as a form of personal empowerment (O'Donnell, 2008), and programs that engage students on some level of youth empowerment have shown direct positive outcomes of academic success (Zimmerman et al., 2018).

Mirra et al. (2016) examined the effects of Middle School Jumpstart (MSJ) schools to investigate the effects of combining a well-structured debate curriculum with the efforts of a national debate league. In collaboration with the Urban Debate League, offering tournament logistics and support and the Word Generation curriculum, middle school students across 88 schools received debate instruction. The schools that used the Word Generation debate curriculum in their schools were labeled MSJ schools. Of those 88 schools, 17 MSJ schools "had extracurricular debate clubs during the 2013-14 school year," of which 179 of those students

attended at least one extracurricular tournament (p. 8). When comparing 28,337 students who attended the 88 MSJ schools, whether or not they had active debate clubs, to 179 MSJ debaters in some of those same schools with active debate clubs who participated in at least one competition, there was a significant difference in outcomes (Mirra et al., 2016): The 179 debaters in Grades 6-8 outperformed the comparison group of 28,337 students in reading comprehension, as measured by the Degree of Reading Power (DRP) assessment.

Additionally, qualitative analysis was conducted with four flagship schools based on their commitment level to the program and their student population's racial and socioeconomic diversity. The results of 34 interviews, which consisted of 24 debaters, six debate teachers, and four school administrators, confirmed the cognitive benefits of debate, with 65% of 34 participants affirming that critical literacy skills were developed through debate. Furthermore, student interviews revealed that the additional efforts and energy they put forth to prepare for the face-to-face tournaments might have been a significant contributor, with 100% of students interviewed reporting feeling an increase in their reading comprehension.

Similarly, research conducted by Shackelford (2019) provided significant evidence to support the academic benefits of debate on middle school students. A 10-year longitudinal sample of 84,169 students was examined to determine whether a causal relationship existed between "students who attended a school that participated in the Elementary and Middle School Baltimore Urban Debate League (BUDL) from 2004-2005 to 2013-2014" (p. 148). The subjects were students who attended the Baltimore City Public School System and volunteered to engage in the elementary and middle school Baltimore Urban Debate League throughout their elementary and middle school years. Of the 84,169 students, the non-debate sample was 81,906 (control) and the debate sample was 2,263.

The independent variable of interest was debate participation, which was identified as debaters who attended at least one tournament between Grades 4 and 8. The outcome variables of interest were academic achievement, absenteeism, and high school graduation. The data were gathered from the Baltimore Education Consortium which maintains demographic and student school records. Academic achievement was measured by students' reading and standardized scores on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) when they were in 8th grade. Absenteeism was measured by the students' average attendance between Grades 4 and 8. High school destination was measured by whether students attended traditional high school, which had 50% to 80% graduation rates, versus a selective high school, which graduated more than 95% of students (reported by Shackelford, 2019, using data from Durham et al.) (p. 148).

Shackelford (2019) used a propensity score model to examine whether the differences between the experimental and control groups were causal. Descriptive analyses evaluated differences between debaters and the control group, and the propensity score technique matched participants based on the following covariates: age, male, race, English Language Learner, Special Education services, free or reduced meals, MSA reading score at Grade 3, MSA math score at Grade 3, and attendance rate between Grades K-3.

The findings of Shackelford's (2019) report showed that starting debate in the elementary years greatly benefited students. Based on the categorical outcomes results, when comparing absenteeism outcomes from Grades K-3 to 4-8, an inverse causal relationship was found among the debaters and absenteeism. Additionally, negative causal relationships were found between debate participation and transferring before high school. Thus, debate participation reportedly caused a decrease in absenteeism and high school transfer. The positive causal relationships found were between debate participation and attending a selective high school, attending a

selective career tech high school, MSA reading score at Grade 8, MSA math score at Grade 8, and attendance rate.

The benefits of speech and debate even extend to the prison system. The Bard Initiative program allows convicts to gain a liberal arts education taught by Bard College faculty. As the Bard Initiative grew, an inmate in 2013 formed the Bard Prison Debate program, which was headed by the husband-and-wife duo, Mr. and Mrs. Register, who were also directing the Bard Debate Union on the college campus. The Bard Prison Debate program's goal was to provide a robust civic education for the inmate students. David Register explained that debating began to permeate the lives of the men; the intellectual discourse they engaged in was not isolated to debate rounds and practice sessions but was expanded to other areas of their lives, such as sparring with other inmates, family members, and friends. Register summarized these inmates' ambitions and desires to contribute positively to society. Most interesting was their view of making a high-level intellectual discourse an everyday part of their lives, thus influencing the intellectual curiosities of those around them. Those confined to a cell can experience difficulty imagining a world beyond the prison walls, to which their contribution would bring value.

Armed with an education, the inmates had forged a new meaning and purpose for themselves. Their improved outlooks were aligned with the low recidivism rates seen among the population. According to Register (2015), "among formerly incarcerated Bard students who earned degrees while in custody, fewer than 2% have returned to prison within three years, a standard measurement period for assessing recidivism" (para. 12). Ultimately, students with access to the rigorous training of speech and debate could leverage it into desired outcomes.

Additionally, the many academic gains developed from speech and debate-led activities (Snow, 2014) may be partly attributed to speech and debate curricula, which prepare students to

acquire knowledge effectively. Speech and debate teaches students not only how to communicate but also how to learn. Learning how to engage in clear thinking, sound argumentation, and logical discussions are the fundamental tools necessary to become an effective learner. Bellon (2000) argued that debate is not merely a content-oriented activity, but "rather, it is a process or a mode of learning closely mirroring the recommendations of cognitive researcher, argument scholars, and critical pedagogists alike" (p. 10).

While the human brain can organize, analyze, dissect, and retain a constant bombardment of information, research on memory has shown that organization is essential to recalling information. Developing a structure for understanding a topic and following a systematic approach to presenting arguments and evidence are fundamental speech and debate goals. Speech and debate teaches students how to organize their thinking, which also means teaching them to take in new information as it is presented. The better a person understands how to critique and analyze what they hear, read, and study, the better they are at understanding theories, concepts, and ideologies from any field. Modern-day school curricula that teach Math, English, Science, Social Studies, and other subjects to school-aged students do not preface the content with memory strategies known to produce enhanced learning, while speech and debate, on the other hand, does. The structure of speech and debate enhances students' learning and memory, and students learn to organize well. For example, Huseman et al. (1972) found a correlation between organization and extended speech and debate participation. Furthermore, students are supported in active learning activities to help stimulate the information they are learning. In a debate round or through a few months of working through a debate resolution, students are in a simulated environment with active learning assignments that encourage learning. Through speech and debate, students can grasp the structure for successful knowledge

construction and engage in the activities necessary to acquire mature and deep understanding (Bellon, 2000). These basics provide the framework for contemporary speech and debate and speech and debate training as we know it today, all of which promote learning and memory.

The speech and debate framework parallels research on promoting active learning (Evans & Gibson, 1994; Omelicheva & Avdeyeva, 2008). The information-processing model involves three major components based on processing and interpreting sensory data and converting data into a form to be recalled later. When presented with information and stimuli from the environment, the data enter through sensory registers where information is stored briefly (Roediger & Guynn, 1996). The ability to retain information in working memory beyond the time of working with it requires filtering and organizing in a way that facilitates effective encoding and storage into long-term memory (Cowan et al., 2006). The strategies used to consolidate memories from short- to long-term involve revisiting encoding in some form. If the information is well organized from the onset, the ability to consolidate and retrieve it from memory is easier (Ricker & Cowan, 2014). Viewed through this lens, the power of debate is clear: The process of learning and classifying information in claims, warrants, and impacts during debate facilitates the orderly compartmentalization of new ideas and concepts. Taken together, speech and debate can help students consolidate the content into long-term memory, promote the retrieval of that information when needed, and facilitate clear and succinct delivery of ideas.

Given that speech and debate has the potential to teach students in the areas reported by NHES as being critical to public health initiatives for students in schools, optimally designed and delivered speech and debate programming can significantly improve socioemotional

competencies, academic achievement, critical thinking, and civic awareness as well as health literacy and wellness.

Summary

Taken together, prosocial behaviors, social-emotional competence, critical literacy, academic achievement, and critical thinking are positively associated with speech and debate (Ferkany, 2008; Hofkins, 2009; Mirra et al., 2016; O'Toole et al., 2017; Winkler, 2007). Additionally, an enormous amount of research has supported the benefits of classroom debate and/or structured discussion regarding academic and civic competencies (Hess, 2009; Hwang et al., 2014; Mirra et al., 2016). We also know that the gains made in pro-sociality (McCarty et al., 2016), social-emotional competence (Taylor et al., 2017), critical literacy, academic achievement, and critical thinking overwhelmingly lead to improved health.

Director of Forensics at Seattle University Jim Hanson (2017) explained that without speech and debate, students do not have opportunities to flourish in the ways that forensics supports. Speech and debate helps students come out of their shells, research for great evidence, improve presentation skills, and more, yet speech and debate opportunities are not widespread in schools. Aside from the NUDL that provides tournament support and instructional materials on debate for a nominal school membership fee, there do not seem to be any systemic efforts to support current debate educators, aspiring coaches, and more during the school day. Granted, a multitude of problems can impact educators' efforts to implement speech and debate programs in schools, such as lack of training, lack of support from administrators, lack of funding, and teachers who are overburdened by regular teaching responsibilities (Carmack & Holm, 2015). However, given the overwhelming evidence of the benefits of speech and debate, there have

been no systematic qualitative reviews showing a direct relationship between speech and debate and health literacy benefits among elementary and middle school students.

In this study, I sought to uncover and capture participants' voices and anecdotes on the benefits, curricula challenges, feasibility, and acceptability of speech and debate as it relates to health literacy and promotion. The grouping and categories developed from this analysis can serve as a starting point for researchers in the field to investigate its merits systematically.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Introduction and Overview

To frame this study, I as the researcher selectively reviewed literature that provided information on the important place persuasive speech has had in world history, the way speech and debate has evolved, and how the modern term "speech and debate" has taken on various names and can be traced to various periods and human civilizations. I also critically reviewed the literature on the benefits of speech and debate on selected student outcomes. After examining the literature spanning the last decade, I found there was no evidence of qualitative studies to understand speech and debate educators' perceptions. Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of speech and debate professionals as they relate to educational and health benefits, definitions and attributes of a successful program, and factors that influence the feasibility and acceptability of speech and debate programs in public primary schools. The research methods involved conducting semi-structured interviews with 25 speech and debate professionals identified through the snowball technique, a sampling method that began by enrolling a small number of individuals who nominated participants thought to be knowledgeable about the questions under study.

Speech and Debate Ecosystem

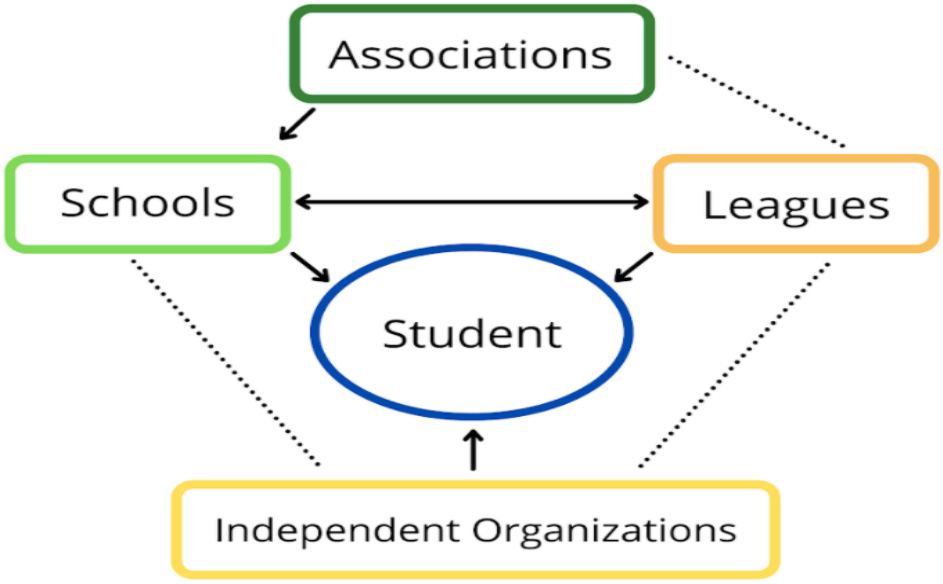
To understand the experiences of players in the speech and debate ecosystem and their affiliations in training, supporting, and reinforcing the needs of current or previous students at the elementary and middle school level, the Figure 1 infographic served as a guide. The framework explains the multifaceted levels within the speech and debate ecosystem and maps its structure, actors, and interdependencies. This figure does not account for every player in the

ecosystem but shows the people represented in this study and how they support positive student outcomes. The arrows in Figure 1 depict primary roles and relationships with other entities, which does not negate partnering, assistance, and direct contact with other entities in the ecosystem**.** Single arrows represent a one-way relationship, two-way arrows represent a bidirectional relationship, and a dashed line represents an unpredictable relationship. At the top of the chart are associations. Figure 1 shows the Business-to-Business (B2B) one-way relationship between the association and the schools because associations typically provide resources and support to students using the schools or leagues as a mediator. Despite having leagues and associations depicted separately in Figure 1, I collapsed them into one category when reporting the findings and analysis because they often perform the same roles.

The one-way Business-to-Consumer (B2C) relationships include (a) public and private schools, (b) speech and debate leagues, and (c) independent organizations (for-profit and not-profits), all of whom provide support and resources directly to students. A bidirectional Business-to-Business (B2B) relationship also exists between the leagues and the schools in that the leagues may provide training, tournament support, and resources to the schools, and the schools may serve as a venue for the league to host tournaments. Lastly, independent organizations, in some cases, work with leagues or schools. However, no set guidelines are in place to determine when those collaborations occur. Due to the unpredictable nature of those relationships, a dashed line illustrates the connections between independent organizations, schools, and leagues (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Speech and Debate Ecosystem



Given the level of competitive speech and debate and the amount of time many students commit to the activity (Mirra et al., 2016), students and the professionals who train them may occupy different spaces. At the elementary and middle school level, very few public schools offer school-based instruction that leads to competitive opportunities. The NSDA only has 370 primary school members as of the 2019-2020 school year, despite there being 87,498 public and private primary schools (67,408 public schools and 20,090 private schools) nationwide (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018).

Since so few students have access to speech and debate programs yet demand is growing among parent communities, educators may occupy roles in various spaces to support student training and development in speech and debate. Speech and debate professionals are comprised of coaches, consultants, and administrator-level executives who interact with students through schools, leagues, debate organizations, and independent organizations. Students who receive

speech and debate instruction with the intent of attending tournaments have been exposed to one or more of the actors in the speech and debate ecosystem.

For instance, students enrolled in their schools' speech and debate programs may supplement their learning with coaching at independent organizations. Additionally, a speech and debate professional may lead a school-based program while simultaneously offering consultancy and/or coaching services to independent organizations. Consequently, speech and debate professionals can not only have various roles within a single entity, but also many roles within the speech and debate ecosystem. The speech and debate ecosystem is complex because professionals can wear multiple hats. This also requires that careful attention be paid to identifying people at multiple levels of the speech and debate ecosystem.

The sample of educators has been segmented into three categories: (a) those who work at schools along with either a league or an association in pursuit of speech and debate initiatives, Schools, Associations and Leagues (SAL); (b) those whose connection with speech and debate is exclusively through schools, Schools Only (SO); and (c) those who work with students as part of an independent debate organization and have working relationships with schools or leagues, Independent-Organizations, Schools, and Leagues (ISL).

Schools, Associations, and Leagues (SAL) Group

Speech and debate professionals in the speech and debate ecosystem may work in schools, associations, and leagues to provide support for students at various schools. Leaders in the industry who sit on boards are executives at the district and regional levels while also serving students in schools. Thus, although the associations were represented separately from the league in Figure 1, the associations and the leagues are grouped together in the analysis as they share similar missions. Speech and debate leagues and associations operate from a Business-to-

Business (B2B) model, in which they service the other entities in the ecosystem in pursuit of helping students thrive. The leagues and associations serve as the head of the consortium, hosting tournaments for member schools and providing support in the form of training for educators as well as resources for member schools and community-based organizations. While leagues and associations primarily promote speech and debate through schools and organizations, they may also provide support to students directly. The word "league" is not regulated by the Department of Education in any state the way that words like "school" or "education" are held to a standard and require licensing or special approval by the State Department of Education. The criteria used in this study to determine what constitutes a league were as follows: (a) those who recruit member schools to provide support and training to advance speech and debate, and (b) those who primarily enroll students to participate in speech and debate tournaments under the headings of their own schools or community-based organizations. The participants in this study were affiliated with the following leagues and associations: Metro DC Debate League, Northwest Forensic Speech and Debate, Southern California Junior Forensic League, Tri-County Forensics League, Urban Debate Leagues (Atlanta, Bay Area, New York, & Silicon Valley UDLs), and the Wisconsin Forensics Coaches Association.

Schools Only (SO) Group

This category includes professionals who gained speech and debate experience from working in a school setting. Instruction may be (a) as part of a daytime speech and debate club/elective, (b) an afterschool or a weekend speech and debate club/elective, and (c) across the curriculum in core subjects in the classroom. Primarily, this sample included those who facilitate elementary and middle school speech and debate instruction in schools during school hours or outside of school hours with school sanctioning. A minority included professionals who work

with rising high school students or were competitors themselves. As students transition from middle school to rising high school students, speech and debate educators in the high school can provide unique insights into the outcomes and expectations for high school speech and debate students and whether there are visible differences among freshmen who have or have not had previous experience. These educators are in a position to evaluate whether students are accepted into speech and debate high school clubs. They may be in roles in which they vet students for entrance onto teams, pair students to team up together, identify best forms of support, and more.

Independent Organizations, Schools, and Leagues (ISL) Group

This category includes professionals from independent organizations—including for-profit and nonprofit organizations—that have grown from a community need, and who work and collaborate with schools or leagues to service students. As speech and debate organizations continue to expand their services, a growing community of parents is enrolling their children in their programs. Thus, as more parents seek to support their students in speech and debate—either through supplementing the programs their children are involved in at their schools or because their schools do not offer speech and debate—independent organizations bring their services directly to the consumer (parents) and end-users (students) in the market. Thus, organizations in the ISL group further expand the spaces where coaches, consultants, and other professionals provide their expertise and services. These organizations follow a Business-to-Consumer (B2C) model bringing services directly to the consumer. However, they also operate in a B2B capacity because they partnered with schools and leagues to pursue their social impact service-driven missions.

Study Participants

A total of 27 interviews were conducted. Of the 27, there were two female pilot participants who were close associates of the researcher, and who had extensive experience in debate after having competed in middle school and high school before going on to coach and provide services to New York City Urban Debate Leagues. While their data were not included in the findings and analysis, their transcripts were used to establish inter-coder reliability. The remaining 25 participants were included in the final sample.

The 25 participants were geographically spread out, with six participants from New York, five from California, five from Wisconsin, four from Washington, and one participant each from: Alaska, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington, DC. Sixteen (64%) participants had extensive experience working with middle school students, while the remaining nine (36%) primarily interacted with high school students. However, the high school speech and debate professionals were also able to offer insights into the interactions they had with middle school students through tournaments and summer programming. As well, they offered insights into the differences between rising high school students with and without speech and debate experience. All 25 participants self-reported their roles in the ecosystem, the populations they serviced, and their vocational roles, along with the following demographic information: age, gender, race, ethnicity, and education level.

Roles in Ecosystem

While geographically limited to those who work in the United States, the snowball sampling method produced nominations that were spread out across all three groups in the ecosystem: (a) professionals from schools; (b) professionals from independent organizations; and (c) professionals from regional, state, and national associations or leagues. The number of

interviews conducted was based on the saturation point, when no additional pertinent information was being obtained. Various scholars have suggested different saturation points. For example, Creswell (2007) indicated that the point of saturation occurs between 25 to 30 interviews, while Guest et al. (2006) and Ando et al. (2014) indicated that saturation for thematic analysis of a homogeneous group occurs at 12. Last, Saunders et al. (2012) indicated that an acceptable range for semi-structured interviews was between 5 and 25.

The sample size for the three groups were as follows. For those who fell under schools, leagues, and associations (the primary groups of interest), the total sample size was 20. These 20 participants were further segmented into two groups to represent their work settings within the ecosystem. Participants with working affiliations in which they supported the efforts in schools, associations, and/or leagues were grouped under the category titled Schools, Associations, and Leagues (SAL); the sample size was nine (36%). Those whose experience with speech and debate was primarily during school day hours were categorized as School Only (SO); this sample size of 11 (44%) included student competitors, coaches, and administrators. For independent organizations, which were of secondary interest, the sample size was five respondents. These final five (20%) participants worked in independent speech and debate organizations that were either for- or nonprofit, and also worked or collaborated with schools or leagues to service students.

The sampling methods began with five participants (described below). All participants nominated through the snowball technique were sent a recruitment note via email that indicated the study's exploratory nature—namely, to improve the understanding of the benefits of speech and debate instruction for primary school students and the experiences of educators when implementing speech debate programs (see Appendix A).

Population Serviced

The majority of participants also serviced urban students. Seventeen (68%) worked with urban students, five (20%) suburban, and the remaining three (12%) worked with a mix of urban and suburban student population.

Speech and Debate Roles

Sixteen (64%) participants indicated their primary roles as coaches, seven (28%) were primarily administrators, and two (8%) were competitors. Among the seven administrators, all had extensive experience coordinating and, in many cases, coaching middle school students, while three were also able to discuss their efforts engaging elementary students.

Age

Age was organized into four categories: below 25, 25-39, 40-60, and above 60. Four participants (16%) reported ages of between 25-39. Seventeen (68%) were between the ages of 40 and 60, and the remaining four (16%) were over the age of 60.

Gender

When reporting gender, participants had the option of selecting female, male, or non-binary categories. There were 13 (52%) males, 11 (44%) females, and one (4%) non-binary participant.

Race and Ethnicity

While there was some variation in race, 17 (68%) were White, five (20%) were Black, two (8%) were Asian, and one (4%) self-identified as mixed race. The ethnic makeup of the participants was reported to be entirely non-Hispanic at 100%.

Education Level

Nine (36%) of the 25 participants held undergraduate degrees, and the remaining 16 (64%) held graduate-level degrees.

Eligibility

This study included data collection from professionals who are actively or were previously involved in speech and debate within the last 5 years. The sample was geographically limited to those speech and debate professionals who work in the United States, speak English, and were at least 18 years old. The second and third rounds of the snowball sample were based on nominations from the initial sample. The exclusion criteria included professionals who have not been involved in speech and debate efforts in the last 5 years, who have less than 2 years of experience teaching, or who do not consent to have the interviews audio-recorded.

Procedure

Snowball Process

For this study, I used a snowball and purposive sampling method. The initial participants were selected because of their extensive experience and expertise in speech and debate leadership roles in their organizations, different parts of the speech and debate ecosystem, and different parts of the country. I selected the sample by starting with respected leaders of school-based speech and debate efforts and used repeated rounds of the snowball technique until 25 participants were identified. The snowball sampling technique began by reaching out to five geographically distributed respected leaders in the field, who I knew through mutual connections and engagements in the speech and debate community. I contacted these prospective participants through email and phone communications. The criteria used to identify the prospective participants included: (a) leadership in the United States, (b) overseeing the operation of speech

and debate for school-aged students, hosting tournaments, recruiting resources, and providing personnel support to service students; and (c) a minimum of 10 years of experience.

The initial sample included one participant from California, one from Georgia, one from New York, one from Washington state, and one from Washington, DC. Each participant was then asked to nominate between three and five people by sending out my recruitment note. Specifically, participants were asked to select nominees who could provide expert knowledge on the benefits, curricula, feasibility, and acceptability of speech and debate in schools. While two of the initial participants did not produce any referrals, I was contacted by referrals from the remaining three participants. These produced six participants for the second round. In turn, those six produced six participants for the third round. Nominees in round three produced eight participants for the fourth and final round.

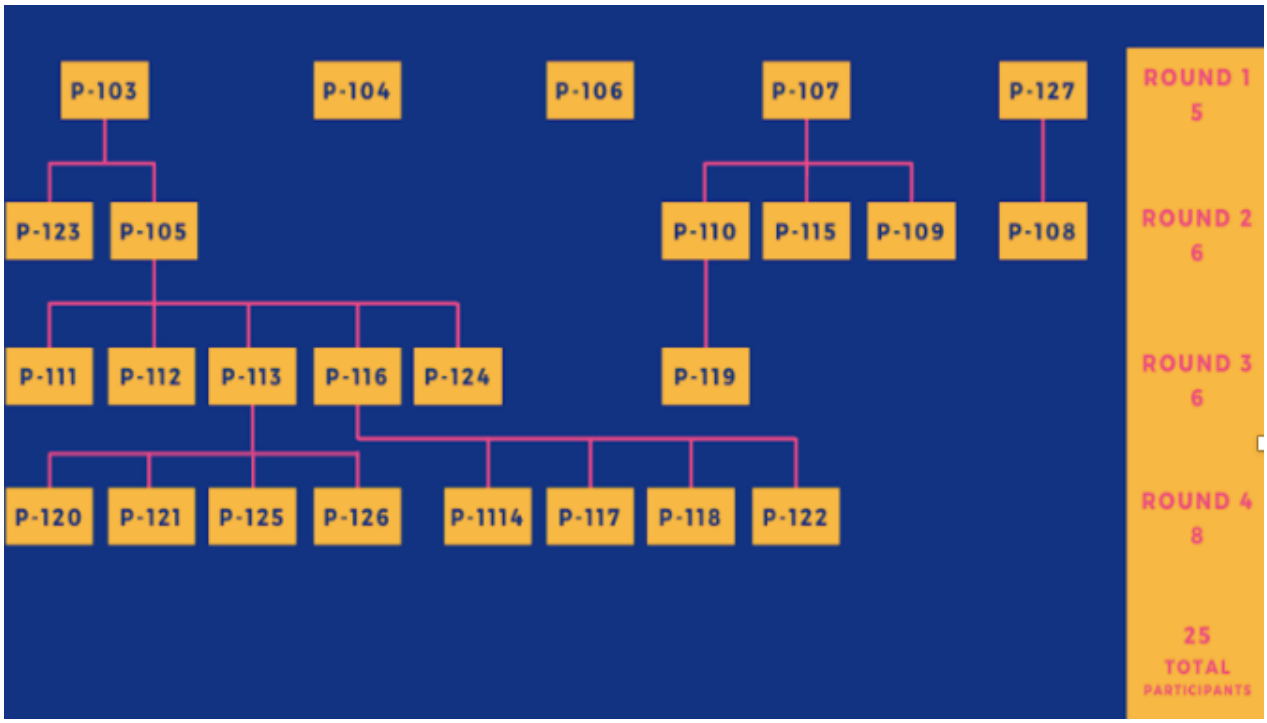
Since the research was focused on understanding the role of speech and debate in schools, participants were asked only to nominate professionals from schools, associations, or leagues who they felt could offer a valuable new perspective as the research findings reached saturation by the fourth round. Naturally, the goals of those who operate in independent organizations—whether that is community-based organizations or for-profit entities—may be antithetical to the purposes of this project. No new nominees came from the fourth round. The sequence and number of people nominated for each round are presented on Figure 2.

Data Collection

I collected the data for this study on the Zoom online platform. This platform provides an audio and visual record of the interaction and an option to obtain a written transcript. The semi-structured interview schedule (described below) that was created for this study guided the data collection with each respondent. Respondents were given the option to opt out of the video

Figure 2

Snowball Sampling Rounds



portion of the interview, but their consent for the audio recording was required for eligibility. I conducted the interviews in a space free of distractions or background noise. The data were collected between June 2021 and September 2022.

Participant Quotes

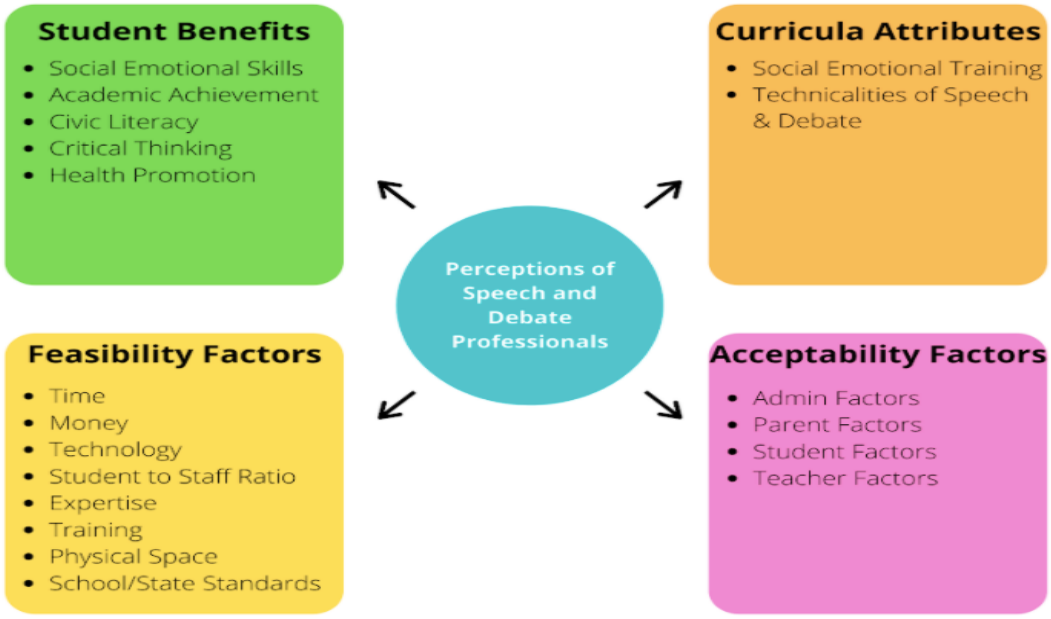
Since the speaking patterns of the participants are not instructive to the purpose of the project, all quotes have been edited for grammar, mechanics, and readability. This editing process included removing repeated words and filler words, such as “like” and “you know,” that were captured in transcription. The editing also included cleaning up sentences to correct fragments and other incomplete sentences.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature and my own professional experience, I used a deductive approach to develop an a priori conceptual framework. The predetermined list of categories and codes depicted in the conceptual framework was limited to four and 19, respectively (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Conceptual Framework



A Priori Codes

Based on the literature and my personal experiences, four key issues were selected to explore regarding speech and debate instruction to primary school students. These were student benefits, curricula attributes, feasibility, and acceptability factors related to offering speech and debate training to primary school students in schools. Thus, those four issues were used to develop the interview schedule and served as a priori categories when analyzing speech and debate professionals' accounts of their experiences working in the field. Nineteen codes were grouped into the four different a priori categories.

The first research question was “What do speech and debate professionals perceive as the educational and health benefits of speech and debate?” For this question, the deductive codes were socioemotional skills, academic achievement, civic literacy, critical thinking, and health promotion. The code was applied for socioemotional skills when participants indicated that speech and debate builds students’ self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision making, and/or relationship skills. Academic achievement was concerned with reading comprehension, GPA, test scores, selective high school entrance, and college admission. Civic literacy referred to civic awareness and civic engagement. As participants indicated words and phrases such as analyze, logic, rational, and evidence-driven, those were coded under critical thinking. Reference made to improvements in mental and physical wellness were coded under health promotion.

The second research question was “How do speech and debate professionals define the curricula attributes of a successful speech and debate program?” The deductive codes used to address this question were socioemotional skills training and the technicalities of speech and debate. The first code was used when participants referenced the general interpersonal skills used in and outside of the speech and debate round necessary for building persuasion, public speaking, confidence building, professionalism, adaptability, and peer collaboration. Technical skills training referred to the structure and execution needed to meet the demands of speech and debate in the round, such as learning how to weigh arguments, engage in refutation, flow arguments/ note taking, case writing, crossfire, speech structure, research, evaluating the credibility of sources, asking good questions, summarizing thoughts, speech strategy, and knowledge of historical and geopolitical affairs.

The third question was “What do speech and debate professionals describe as factors that influence the feasibility of a successful speech and debate program?” The deductive codes used to examine findings included time, money, technology, student-to-staff ratio, expertise, training, physical space, curriculum, and school/state standards factors that may preclude the implementation of speech and debate instruction. For feasibility factors, it was anticipated that professionals may discuss lack of time, limited technology, age-appropriate content, lack of curriculum, lack of expertise, physical space limitations, a dearth in the coaching staff, and inadequate funding.

The fourth question was “What do speech and debate professionals describe as factors that influence the acceptability of successful speech and debate programs?” The codes for the final question were grouped into four categories to represent the different stakeholders in the student community: parents, students, administrators, and teachers. Participants were probed on their perceptions of parents’, students’, administrators’, and teachers’ desirability to implement speech and debate programming for school-age students. The parent factor coding speaks directly to the motivation and willingness of parents to support changes and effort to implement instructional change. The codes used regarding students arose from participants’ perceptions that referenced motivation among the students as being influential. The codes used to establish teachers’ acceptability referenced motivation among the teaching staff as influential. Participants may also have included training and alignment as factors that impacted teachers’ motivation to implement speech and debate training. Administrator acceptability was used to code responses that referenced motivation among the non-teaching staff as being influential.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed participants the flexibility to expand on their ideas and perceptions and allowed me to further explore topics that emerged. Semi-structured interviews also allowed me to learn about variables that may not have been initially considered. In using semi-structured interviews for this study, I expected the interview data to reveal more about the underlying issues that impede the widespread expansion of speech and debate in primary schools. During the individual interviews, participants were asked to discuss their experience with implementing or maintaining speech and debate efforts, including the impacts—both good and bad—that they have had in the lives of their students.

The interview questions were organized around the four main categories outlined above: student benefits, curricular attributes, feasibility factors, and acceptability factors (see Appendix C). First, participants were asked questions about the benefits experienced by speech and debate students with whom they have worked. Then, they were asked to discuss the features and outcomes of successful speech and debate programming. Finally, participants were asked about the resource factors and stakeholders that influence the feasibility and acceptability of successful speech and debate implementation in schools.

The interview guide included both direct and open-ended questions, as Assarroudi et al. (2018) suggested was an important step in the process. An example of a typical open-ended question is “Can you tell me a story about a student who experienced a positive transformation, which you think might have been facilitated by their engagement in speech and debate?” An example of a direct question is “What is taught in a speech and debate program?” I also

structured probing questions for the interview to unearth more information. Common probing questions included statements like “Can you give me an example to explain more?”

In addition to the interview questions related to the aims of the study, participants were asked at the end of the interview to respond to a series of demographic questions, e.g., age, gender, race/ethnicity, number of years as a speech and debate educator, primary role within the speech and debate ecosystem, previous role, positions held in speech and debate, number of years working in the field, and employment location. Finally, participants were asked to nominate three to five people who were leaders in school-based speech and debate efforts who might be willing to participate in the research study.

At the end of the interview, respondents were given the opportunity to amend or clarify anything previously said. This was prompted by the question “Is there anything you would like to discuss or anything you would like to modify about what we’ve discussed today?” In the weeks following the interview, respondents also received a summary outlining the significant takeaways, giving them another opportunity to modify what they reported.

Pilot Study

Before the main study, I conducted a pilot study to practice administering the interview, to assess whether revisions to any questions were warranted, and to establish intercoder reliability. All interviews were completed online via Zoom. The initial sample consisted of a purposive sample of two speech and debate coaches, who were not used in the primary study. The pilot study was conducted to meet three goals. First, the pilot study helped refine the interviewing process. Second, it determined if the interview questions yielded information relevant to the aims of the study and any issues related to the questions. Third, it was used to increase “the consistency and transparency of the coding process” (O’Connor & Joffe, 2020,

p. 2). The data collected were used by the two coders, who independently coded the transcripts and compared their results. This helped refine the codebook until an acceptable level of intercoder reliability (ICR) was reached. ICR helps provide "confidence that specific efforts were made to ensure the final analytic framework represents a credible account of the data" (p. 2). Results from the intercoder assessment are described below.

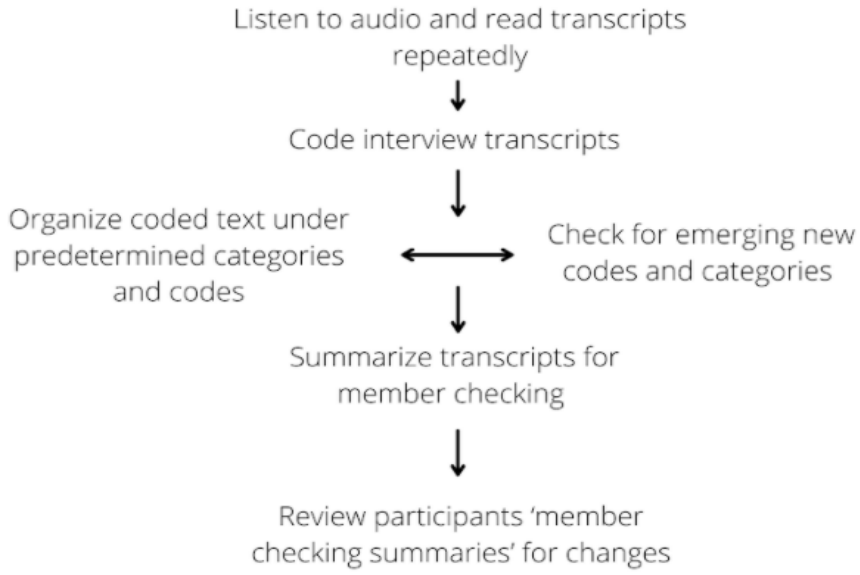
Qualitative Data Analysis

This study's data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis. Qualitative thematic analysis is a qualitative research method where the researchers systematically code the data to identify, analyze, organize, and describe categories to be used to report themes and subthemes (Nowell et al., 2017). The subcategories and codes were used to represent the themes and subthemes that are found.

As Creswell (2014) suggested, I followed a systematic coding process whereby I analyzed and organized the statements into categories. The interview transcripts were coded using words, phrases, and germane sentences. After each interview was conducted, the transcriptions from the Zoom audio recordings were corrected. The transcripts were coded by color coding and highlighting the necessary content using a secure Google.doc file. The process of analyzing participant responses ended with member checking (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Process of Analyzing Participant Responses



Source: Adapted from Creswell (2012, p. 237)

Before sending participants their summary to review, I closely analyzed the interview data by listening to the audio and reading the transcripts repeatedly in the first wave of analysis. I summarized the textual data, identified clear links between the research questions and findings, and used that information to organize text under preset codes and categories. Then, I sent the summary of the transcript to each participant for member checking, a tool to enhance the trustworthiness and validity of participants' responses (Birt et al., 2016). Nine of the 25 (36%) participants reviewed the member check summaries, with (n = 2) responding they were accurate and (n = 7) providing updates for revision.

Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability are identified as being salient to the trustworthiness of a qualitative research study. Credibility and dependability are closely aligned (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Demonstrating credibility establishes a study's internal validity, ensuring that the study measures what it intends to (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability demonstrates the consistency and reliability of the research findings. "Transferability refers to the applicability of one set of findings to another setting" (Sikolia et al., 2013, p. 2). It impacts the external validity of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability is used to show that findings and researcher's interpretations are grounded in the participants' narratives and words and not in researcher bias. This study achieved trustworthiness through member checking, an audit trail through reflexive journaling, intercoder reliability, and triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004; Thomas, 2006).

Member Checking

Member checking is "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). It is a powerful process for establishing the trustworthiness of a study. Pitney (2004) suggested that dependability can be achieved through member checking as long as the "researcher takes the time to share the participant's data with him or her and explain how it contributes to the overall findings" (p. 27). After each interview, respondents received a summary of their responses to review for accuracy and resonance of their responses. Using Creswell's (2005) guidelines, I organized the summary into five themes: (a) student benefits, (b) curricula, (c) feasibility, (d) acceptability, and (e) other. The other section was held for additional information reported by respondents that did not fit into the a priori sections. To

facilitate dependability, under each theme, there were bulleted points to summarize the gist of what participants conveyed throughout the interview and the "verification of the [researcher's] emerging theories and inferences as these were formed during the dialogues" (Shenton, 2004, p. 69).

Member checking also served as a reflexive experience allowing an "actor to check for accuracy and possibly encourage an alternate interpretation" (Candela, 2019, p. 620). Participants were asked to verify whether descriptions were complete and accurate and if the interpretations were fair and representative (Creswell, 2005). In this process of member checking, participants had 2 weeks to amend, clarify, or add to what was captured. As suggested by Creswell and Miller (2000), comments from participants were included in the final narrative.

Audit Trail Through Reflexive Journaling

Maintaining an audit trail through reflexive journaling is a powerful tool that can be used to establish all forms of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton 2004). The reflexive journaling was part of the audit trail to show the "beliefs underpinning decisions made and methods adopted," with admission made about the limitations and weaknesses that may have resulted from those decisions (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicated that an audit trail serves many purposes, and the journal can be used to establish all forms of trustworthiness because it examines the self and the method. They discussed the importance of the audit trail for dependability. The accuracy and reliability of the data can be established through a dependability audit tracking how the data were collected and maintained. Shenton (2004) indicated that reflexive journaling can achieve confirmability by minimizing researcher bias. The confirmability audit can help others determine if a researcher's findings, interpretations, and recommendations are well supported to ascertain objectivity. The reflexive

journal that helps track the audit trail data is essential in establishing both internal and external validity, which is evident in credibility and transferability, respectively (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Reflective journaling served as an audit trail of the research process and decisions and assumptions guiding the decisions made (Cope, 2014). To control that, a researcher maintains a daily reflexive journal to facilitate critical reflection of his/her perceptions and subjectivity. This journal includes thoughts, document introspections, and a record of the process. Shenton (2004) encouraged the researcher to provide thorough details on the research design and implementation, the data-gathering process, and a reflexive appraisal evaluating the process. Reflexive journaling allows researcher to record initial impressions that emerge after interviews and track continued patterns and generated theories. According to Shenton (2004), this ongoing monitoring of reflections that emerge from the journaling is referred to by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as "progressive subjectivity" (p. 68).

The audit trail was presented in a table to show how the data were gathered and analyzed. Different rounds of participant interviews were organized in waves. The first wave included the pilot participants, followed by wave two, including the first round of study participants. Each subsequent round of participants was categorized under a wave. The rounds continued until saturation was reached regarding the main questions of interest. The dates for each interview were documented showing (a) the number of days between each interview, (b) whether participants commented on the summaries, and (c) the amount of time that elapsed between the request of member check and response, if received.

Intercoder Reliability

Two coders were responsible for independently coding the data gathered from transcribed interviews from the pilot study. Their codes were compared in a process known as intercoder reliability (ICR) (Armstrong et al., 1997). ICR is a "widely used term for the extent to which independent coders evaluate a characteristic of a message or artifact and reach the same conclusion" (Lombard et al., 2010, p. 2). The goal was to determine credibility and dependability. The ICR process involves checks and reaching a consensus on the coded categories. In developing the codes, "the data are segmented into data units, and each data unit is labeled with codes that index its analytically relevant content" (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020, p. 2). To this end, I was the first coder, and a health education doctoral candidate served as the second coder who reviewed the transcribed interviews from the pilot study.

The process to establish ICR was iterative. The first transcript (P-101) was used to refine the codebook and to practice independently coding. The second coder and I established the rules for the inclusion or exclusion of different codes. Thereafter, we simultaneously coded a sample of P-101's transcript. The code frame was then modified and refined to reflect the information reported by the pilot participant (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020; Thomas, 2006). Attention was given to the codes that were ambiguous. I used the coded results to train the second coder further. We met several times to simultaneously review the transcript to ensure the coded frame was more explicit, precise, and well defined (Joffe & Yardley, 2003). Any inconsistencies revealed were "discussed among coders to clarify the conflicting interpretations responsible" (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020, p. 4). At this point, there were concerns about the difficulty of independently identifying the same segments to code. Despite those concerns, P-103's transcript was independently coded. I identified 35 codes, and the second coder selected 38 codes. The ICR was

determined by dividing the number of consistently coded data units by the total number of coded data units. Since 14 of the 38 codes matched, the ICR was calculated at 36.8%. Again, I and the second coder met to agree on the rules for inclusion and exclusion for different codes and update the codebook definitions. Upon further examination, it was discovered that the discrepancies in codes assigned to the words and sentences in the transcript did not reflect a disagreement in the coder's impressions, but rather a consequence of selecting different data segments to code. Eighteen of the same data segments were selected by both coders. Thus, a secondary calculation was conducted to report the percentage of data units for which the coders agreed. Of the 18 consistently coded data units, four discrepancies resulted in an ICR of 77.7%. Based on those findings, I decided that the coded segments would be established prior to coding the transcript. To establish intercoder reliability, "an uncoded file that can then easily be passed to a second coder" was created (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020, p. 7). I independently coded the first transcript by highlighting the meaningful units of analysis on Google.doc. A second copy was saved removing the codes yet leaving the data segments highlighted and visible. The second coder used the uncoded file to independently code the highlighted segments in the initial transcript (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

By the time the coding of the second pilot transcript (P-102) was initiated, I and the coder had already reviewed two transcripts: the first pilot transcript (P-101) which was used strictly for training purposes, and P-103's transcript which had an ICR of 77.7%. The coders used the most recently revised codebook to code P-102's pilot transcript independently. The total number of consistently coded data units was 30, which was divided by 32, the number of coded data units, to produce an ICR score of 93.75%.

Triangulation

Through source triangulation, the transferability and confirmability of the findings were established (Shenton, 2004; Sikolia et al., 2013). Source triangulation is a type of trustworthiness that can be established by analyzing participants' "data from multiple settings and finding common themes among them" (Pitney, 2004, p. 27). Interviews were conducted with different professionals who interfaced with students in the ecosystem to produce data source triangulation, which "involves the collection of data from different types of people, including individuals, groups, families, and communities, to gain multiple perspectives and validation of data" (Carter et al., 2014, p. 545).

I interviewed speech and debate professionals from different settings who spoke to their experiences and perceptions of speech and debate in schools and student benefits either because they worked in the schools or they had a transactional relationship with the schools. The range of speech and debate informants helped to reveal themes and generate important inferences. This technique of source triangulation is "a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). While some professionals within the sample occupied various roles within the ecosystem, this was not expected to dilute the results but, rather, to further support their individual views, as they spoke from the vantage point of many lenses. Rather, the multiple perspectives that individuals shared helped to validate the data further, which, according to Lincoln and Guba (2013), helps to validate the responses further.

Institutional Review Board

Approval from the Teachers College IRB was obtained in June 2021 before initiating the recruitment of interview participants (see Appendix J). Interested participants were provided an

informed consent form (see Appendix B) detailing the study's benefits and risk and confidential nature. Participants' verbal informed consent was recorded via Zoom at the outset of each interview. Participants received pseudonyms when describing their responses. All hard copies of written documents and recordings were stored in a secure room in my home, and the transcripts and audio recordings were password-protected files in Teachers College Google files.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the main findings that emerged from the following research questions:

1. What do speech and debate professionals perceive are the educational and health benefits of speech and debate?
2. How do speech and debate professionals define the curricula attributes of a successful speech and debate program?
3. What do speech and debate professionals describe as factors that influence the feasibility of a successful speech and debate program?
4. What do speech and debate professionals describe as factors that influence the acceptability of a successful speech and debate program?

RQ1: Benefits

The first research question explored the benefits received by students who participated in speech and debate. There were five main findings: socioemotional learning (100%), civic literacy (72%), critical thinking (92%), academic (68%), and health promotion (68%) (see Appendix E).

Social-Emotional Learning

All of the participants acknowledged social and emotional learning as a benefit (100%). The Collaborative for Social, Emotional and Academic Learning (CASEL, 2013) referred to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as "an integral part of education and human development," with five complementary competencies for children and adults to develop healthy identities: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. All of the participants were aware of the social and emotional benefits borne

out through speech and debate, and they each referred to some aspect of the interrelated skills as they talked about the wonders of speech and debate.

Self-Identity. Most participants spoke about the internal reflections that were a by-product of examining other people's narratives. P-112 explained that the diverse perspectives that students learn from speech and debate could be healthy for their self-identity.

> Speech and debate teach you that there are more than two sides to everything; there's a multiplicity of sides. And that means that for a lot of these kids, they start questioning and acknowledging the multiplicity of identities that they have within them, they come to the surface, they're exposed and hopefully celebrated.

As these students explore their identities, they begin to disclose many mental health issues they are facing. P-118 explained how creating a trusted, safe space helps students become vulnerable, honest, and comfortable in integrating their personal and social identities.

> There was a trust factor. That's where your counseling comes in, and then you can have kids that aren't afraid to tell you who they are or what they're experiencing at home. [For example,] being afraid of coming out or sharing all the different problems that young people have today.

P-113 highlighted how students received help to work through problems. She said that for many students, speech and debate is a lifeline that not only shapes their future professional selves but saves them from mental health issues.

> It's more seed planting than it is glory, so ten years from now, those kids might come back and say, "Oh my God, I got this job because I knew how to do this or that; this is something I use every day." It's hard to get this immediate gratification to understand how important this is or [to understand that] this kid's life was saved because I noticed that she was a cutter.

Another essential element of the self-awareness component of SEL is the growth mindset that students achieve. By exploring divergent views, students in low-performing schools get opportunities to examine the entire playing field and challenge themselves in ways that foster

growth. P-114 explained how the strides students make in speech and debate can help stamp out a mentality of hopelessness.

> It's constantly trying to break generational curses and negative self-fulfilling prophecies within the students. It's an ongoing job, and it's a very difficult job. But once you are able to break through, they take the ball, and you're in for a journey, and it's always a fun one.

Group Membership. Debate is an inclusive space that benefits students who may be predisposed to going down a negative path. P-105 observed that some students are born into neighborhoods where illicit activities are the norm. For those students, their negative relationships are a product of those environments.

> Every once in a while, I have had students who have encountered gang recruitment or have been in and out of certain involvement in the neighborhood. Maybe that was a part of something that their family was interacting with, and so they were sort of born into a neighborhood involvement.

However, P-127 explained to parents that speech and debate offers an alternate "gang" where students can build relationships and gain membership.

> Your kids are going to join a gang no matter what. Better that they are entering a gang that is good and hard-working.

Additionally, the support that students feel when they are part of a team has mental health benefits, as P-112 explained:

> Their teammates come and support them and pick them up. [They'll say things] like you'll get it next time, let's go over the organization that you think you lost on, let me help you prep this card so that you've got it better next time. So I would say mental health, it can help by being part of a group.

P-115 also underscored that the supportive environment that is developed through speech and debate positively impacts students. He mentioned how smart students who may lack popularity develop friendships through debate.

> There's a joke among debaters. That joke continued into my leagues. The informal slogan of debate is "Debate helps smart kids make friends" because sometimes smart kids aren't very popular.

Additionally, most participants have hailed the benefits of communication that speech and debate offer related to improved relationship skills. Based on P-108's accounts, failing and troubled relationships are a product of poor communication.

> The true benefit is that you communicate so much better. I know that I had in personal relationships with my girlfriend at the time. When I first started doing speech, it improved our communication. We had a happier, healthier relationship, where I wouldn't get angry or curse. When people get angry, it's because they're having trouble expressing themselves.

Leadership. As students become better communicators, they gain leadership skills, an important aspect of relationship skills. P-103 remarked that even quiet students evolve into leaders.

> Seeing her transformation from identifying as a quiet student to being a leader in her educational space to also being a top speaker within the state speaks wonders.

P-106 observed that in group situations, student often look to the debaters in the class to lead.

> I think the debaters stand out because they understand what it takes to make an entire group function, whether it's a two-person, eight-person, or ten-person group, my debaters tend to be the ones who are asked to always be the leaders in the group.

Some students with loud voices were already leaders in their own spaces but were ineffective in transferring those skills to the classrooms. P-126 said that debate was a way to engage students who have loud voices by offering them an untraditional outlet to share their views.

> We were seeking out in many cases the folks that I have always felt were too loud for traditional classrooms. And the question that high school and middle school admins struggle with is "What do you do with a student with a serious opinion, and the student feels strongly about an issue?" In many cases, traditional frameworks for classroom management don't really brook opposition, and they don't brook multiple opinions on an issue and policy. The teacher just kind of lays down [the rule].

Emotional Regulation. The rational arguments that speech and debate students are expected to present positively impact their interpersonal development. P-110 explained how speech and debate training permits students to take ownership of an argument, freeing them from emotions that may fester.

> Well, I think it's separating themselves from their emotion. By having to argue both perspectives, they're not so attached to their one idea that they feel personally attacked.

Additionally, P-124 said that the emotional regulations students get through disagreements are fostered by learning to deliver rational arguments throughout a conflict.

> Maybe learning to deal with a conflict a little bit better, like using your debate skills, so having a conflict with a student or their parents or a teacher, like understanding how to make your opinion in a rational way and listening to the other side and coming up with counter-arguments.

Similarly, P-104 explained how assigning sides to elementary, middle, and high school students helps to reduce their stress or fears or persecution over their beliefs, while simultaneously giving them room to explore the possibilities.

> Internal dialogue is happening in the development of kids that age when they are assigned to a side and for an assigned topic. They're just doing the best they can with what has been told to them, but it's not like they chose to advocate for this personally, and so it frees a lot of that anxiety about [worrying,] "I feel like these people might judge me for things that I say."

Self-Discipline. P-108 talked about self-discipline and self-motivation, which are necessary ingredients he found through speech and debate. He went on to say that the demands that accompany speech and debate require a shift in behaviors.

> How do you organize things when you have no self-regulation and self-discipline? I had to find it. And I think that helped me focus much more on doing those things. To be competitive at the level to win a national title is really difficult. And in order to get there, I had to change my life totally.

An equally important aspect of self-management is the ability to manage one's time and exhibit self-discipline. P-106 talked about debaters having to learn how to juggle many priorities while participating in debate.

> It helps them [middle schoolers] learn how to manage their time. They have twenty minutes to prepare, and they learn how to get things done so that they can get their presentation ready, and they can engage.

Speech and debate also leads to the setting of personal and collective goals. P-113 found that everyone has challenges, yet speech and debate is an activity where everyone can have equal playtime to work on them. P-113 went on to say that everyone gets to be part of a supportive team while working on personal goals.

> Nobody gets to sit on the sidelines. So, it's like a cross-country team in a sense, always working for your personal best, but you are part of a supportive team. You don't ever feel like you're spotted out as the one that has to perform or the one that has to be the best, and there's so much room in this activity to set personal individual goals that you really can be entirely inclusive with this activity.

Expanded Worldview. While everyone lives in their own echo chamber of information, debate forces students to momentarily adopt views directly contrary to their own view. P-103 highlighted how speech and debate middle students learn to view the world from other people's perspectives.

> They're able to explore narratives that are many times different from their own, and so they become well-rounded in empathy and inclusion and diversity, and I think those are some of the main benefits of debate and speech.

Starting to have students tackle alternative views in elementary school also works. P-110 mentioned that elementary students have difficulty considering alternative viewpoints, and it is not until they are asked to defend an alternate view that they begin to expand their perspectives.

> Being put in a position where you have to argue the opposite side of what you believe, many kids start out a session, for example, saying I can't do that. But by the end, like getting joy and excitement out of arguing a position different than what they believed in

> and not being intimidated by that. Because understanding that their opinion is not the point, it's a game of gaining an understanding of the entire picture of a topic.

P-104 explained how exploring different viewpoints helps students be moderate and accept other people's views.

> It also allows people to actually explore ideas that are both their own belief system, but also to explore ideas that are outside of their own, which allows people to be more tolerant towards each other, too.

Debate forces students to examine diverse social norms and political thought. Through travel competitions and learning diverse topics, students realized that different people have different priorities. P-127 explained how enjoyable it was to watch this dynamic play out in front of him.

> My favorite story is when I judged an elimination round at the Stanford tournament about six or seven years ago now, and the topic was banning and private ownership of handguns. I was judging a round between a kid from Dallas and the kid from the Bay Area on the topic of guns. Some very strong stereotypes associated with those parts of the country; the kid from Dallas had a big belt buckle and everything. But it was reversed, so I had to listen to a kid from Texas tell me why guns were bad and listen to a girl from the Bay Area tell me why guns were good, and so it's really good for bridging understanding that way.

P-115 explained how affluent middle school students from Seattle learned so much about the world they were forced to see outside of their bubble.

> It teaches them so much about what it means to be a private school student on the east side. What does that mean compared to the world around them? You know, I said, Let's be real here. I had a student who, you know, had no understanding whatsoever of poverty. I mean, they think they know what poverty is, but they have no idea and to use debate to sort of explain that is really powerful.

Civic Literacy

The majority of participants acknowledged civic literacy as a benefit (72%).

Civic Discourse as a Benefit. Many participants consistently acknowledged that the voices of students are essential and well-exercised through speech and debate training. In

addition, the argumentation style that is foundational to speech and debate promotes perspective-taking and civil discourse. However, P-110 noted that the power of speech and debate to improve students' civic literacy was not apparent from the outset. When the entire country became more involved in political discourse during the Trump administration, students would articulate and argue their parents' views. At the time, P-110 realized how the soft skills learned in speech and debate can facilitate civil discourse.

> In 2015 and 2016, when politics were flaring like crazy, the kids would come in reciting their parents' political viewpoints and arguing with each other without knowing what they were really arguing about. It really gave us an opportunity at that point to start talking to build an even deeper understanding as the whole country was blowing up the idea of civil discourse, and active listening is a tremendous skill.

To build students' confidence, P-116 also insisted that speech and debate is necessary for middle school students to communicate their lived experiences. She, however, referred to the views of students as being their own.

> I think we wait until they're seventeen and eighteen, and then we want to listen to them, but no, they have wonderful ideas. Their specific opinions about what is going on in the world and how it impacts them, especially their parents. They want to have an opportunity to speak on whether or not the President of the country is a good president or whether we truly have climate change.

Whether students' views are their own or the ideas of those recycled around them, P-124 explained that students learn other people's perspectives through debates.

> In terms of current events and just general knowledge, they learn so much. And the most important part is they learn the whole story of every topic that we do because they have to be ready for both sides.

Interestingly, P-104 found that learning there are valid contradictory opinions in the world helps debate students change how they perceive others.

> Because if you are required to think of something from different perspectives, you recognize that there are valid perspectives out there that are not your own, which is something that I think is dwindling in our society. When somebody doesn't agree with your side or your perspective, you discount people pretty quickly.

Civic Awareness as a Benefit. Students' view of what it means to live in a democracy is widened after being exposed to public issues and governmental processes that shape people's political thoughts and impact their lived experiences. P-127 acknowledged that students' participation in civic discourse with diverse people is essential to sustaining America's democratic form of government.

> The other deeper issue that I really appreciate about speech and debate nowadays, with the way that our country is—it teaches kids how to be a citizen in a democracy. By understanding multiple points of view, and that the way you experience the world is not the way that other people experience the world. We debate with people from all around the country.

To promote the civil literacy of middle school students, P-115 explained that their speech and debate league frequently selected resolutions that impacted the students' local community.

> Tulane University's league chose resolutions that were directly related to the city of New Orleans. [For example], what if a hurricane came through, what was more important, the wetlands or the levees? These are things that don't come up in conversations in Seattle or New York. The things that they chose made students do a lot of research about their local community, which was awesome.

P-103 said students are not taught to consider how economic, social, and political structures intersect with their community in a traditional classroom, whereas debate offers those opportunities. In explaining the benefits of speech and debate, P-103 noted:

> I think that one benefit is that students are able to learn about a number of communities and a number of groups and a number of issues outside of their own school and home and community environments. They're able to explore probably deeper than they would in a traditional classroom. And then also if they're competing in leagues such as the New York City Urban Debate League, they are definitely focused on a number of current social and political issues throughout the year.

As a former debater, P-121 credited debate for raising his consciousness. He recognized the opportunities that exist to examine structures of power.

> There are a lot of intangibles you get from debate. You learn a lot about life; you learn a lot about privilege; you learn a lot about class and challenging the status quo. And those lessons were both in the rounds and outside of [the rounds].

Civic Engagement as a Benefit. In a democratic society, the civic literacy of its citizens is foundational. It is a tool to empower and engage citizens. Unfortunately, P-120 said the civic competencies necessary to be active, empathetic members of a democracy are not taught in the schools.

> I think debate is a playground for democracy. I think that it teaches students empathy, so they have to learn how to listen to viewpoints that they don't necessarily share. They have to engage in refutation; they have to understand and present the best strongest case that their opponent is making in language that their opponent can understand and that the judge can understand, so they have to learn how to be empathetic listeners. They need to learn to reflect and ask questions about their own social location and its relationship to structures of power, and that is something that oftentimes is not taught in our public education system, either in middle school, high school or, sadly, college.

Students who learn the civic competencies necessary to be active members of democracy use their skills as a vehicle to influence change. P-118 observed that forensics students consistently become adults who promote positive change.

> I have found that, over the years, the students that I've worked with that have had the speech and debate training or forensics training have become some of the most successful people and have been able to use their ideas to promote public change in a very positive way, and they are very impactful. They have learned how to be confident speakers.

P-123 concurred that as students learn to articulate their lived experiences persuasively, they gain the confidence to advocate.

> Once kids realize, even as young as eighth and ninth graders, that a lot of the lived experiences that we go through can be embedded in the argumentation that we share in a formal setting or even in an informal setting. It gives a lot of those children the confidence that the information they can provide is valuable and worthy of being heard to various audiences.

P-126 found that students labeled as being too boisterous would be the ones who would benefit the most from being heard. He further explained that students with loud voices do well in debate because they can channel those penchants to speak about information that can benefit society.

> There are a bunch of [loud] students who have a lot to say if you can channel that energy. That voice is actually extremely valuable not just to the school, not just to the classroom, not just to the students themselves, but really valuable to the society at large. We did definitely seek out the folks who were struggling because their voice was too strong, and in many cases, those folks are ready to be leaders, given the right context.

Students demonstrate civic engagement not only through the expression of their words but also through their actions. While working with a group of disadvantaged minority students, P-114 reminds them that their ability to propel themselves forward, despite the lower stereotypical expectations of others, is revolutionary.

> You have to sit there and look at just stepping foot and showing up on a Saturday morning in cold weather on a bus. In itself, it's activism! It's a form of revolution, and it's something that a lot of kids, if they were in your shoes, would not do.

Critical Thinking

The majority of participants acknowledged critical thinking as a benefit (92%). While systematically considering all aspects of an argument, students use many sub-skills of critical thinking to examine all elements in a broader context. The majority of the participants spoke to some level of critical thinking, whether they were referring to reasoning skills, identifying problems in argumentation, evaluating information, analyzing assertions, or reflecting on evidence.

P-112 explained her dismay in watching the degradation of civility and critical thinking while working in government.

> I think society is why I started a speech and debate program. I was a senior legislative aide on Capitol Hill, and this was back in the late Eighties, early Nineties. I saw the polarization of the two parties. They did not want to compromise; they refused to see it from the other person's point of view; there was no critical thinking, there was no critical listening. I'm being hyperbolic here, but civility was on its way out. And I left as a result.

The Link Between Critical Thinking and Argumentation. Overall, P-112 pointed to the impact of debate on communication in general.

> Speaking and communication and, like the Toulmin model of different augmentation styles, teaches you very clear expository writing, critical thinking, and critical listening, which people don't talk enough about.

The reverse is also true. P-107 explained that learning how to think critically through research helps students develop and clearly communicate compelling arguments.

> Students learn how to research. They learn how to think about arguments and the research that they do critically. I mean there are a lot of people [who] do not understand how to make an argument that's going to persuade people, and it really puts that at a premium and helps the students do that. I think they become better communicators in the sense that they have to work with their partners if they're doing a team type of paper.

P-119 acknowledged the cognitive interplay of critical thinking and argumentation. He further discussed the clarity of thought that comes from being able to think critically.

> How do you decide which is the most important benefit?… There are a host of them. There are intellectual, cognitive benefits in terms of developing the capacity to think critically and the ability to make and engage with arguments, and, therefore, the ability to think in a more structured and clear way.

Similarly, P-121 discussed the benefits of clear thinking.

> Of all the benefits, I would say it is critical thinking or the ability to be able to think for yourself.

Promotes Independent Thinking. The ability to gather information and make independent assertions lends itself to independent thinking. P-118 acknowledged the benefits of being able to discern the quality of information.

> They also do their research, asking themselves, is this a fact or is this an opinion? Learning how to navigate correctly and not being satisfied with just a few answers and being able to research more until they get to the bottom of a problem.

P-124 explained how students learn to avoid falling prey to emotional reasoning.

> And it's really amazing to watch them make that case. I think it also lets them separate argument and information from emotions, so they get okay with arguing a side they don't agree with and just understanding that there are so many different opinions in the world, and there is a difference between emotion and opinion.

According to P-104, developing critical thinking skills also helps students identify substantive arguments.

> The academic benefits that I see are primarily critical thinking. That's the number one thing, and this is more unique to debate than even speech. And I know there are some formats of speech that introduce more of the switch sides, but when debaters are asked to look at a topic and then be able to defend both sides of this topic, it makes them recognize that there are good arguments on both sides, and you just have to find what those good arguments are.

Educators see the benefits of critical thinking in and outside of the speech and debate space. P-110 explained how teachers attest that the reasoning skills elementary debaters develop are visible in their persuasive writing and group interactions. When comparing students involved in debate to their non-debate peers, the differences are noticeable.

> So those are a lot of soft skills. We also have seen an increase in critical thinking skills. We hear from elementary school teachers coming back talking about how the students in debate [are improved in] their persuasive writing and their ability to interact collaboratively with each other. They can see the kids in debate versus the kids who are not in debate. They can see measurable differences.

P-120 recounted the frustration he felt when he realized that the charter school network he worked for enjoyed the academic benefits that came from critical thought, but was dismayed by the dangers it posed to the institution.

> It's funny because the charter school network loved the academic skills that debate taught students and really was a strong believer in that. But when it came to the critical thinking and the advocacy and the agency—all of that stuff was seen as being dangerous and having no place in a high school context, which is just outrageous and frustrating.

Academic

The majority of participants acknowledged the academic benefits (68%). The academic benefits discussed by P-111 are very much related to critical thinking, analysis, and argumentation skills that many participants highlighted throughout. For example, P-111 talked

about the various higher-order thinking skills that positively impact students' cognitive development.

> The first is higher-order thinking skills. Look at something like Bloom's taxonomy; you have to recall, understand, apply; then you have to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize. You have the whole spectrum here. You need to be able to recall facts, understand them and how they interplay, analyze a source, analyze an argument, break it down, and have a response ready.

However, some respondents spoke directly to the impacts of those cognitive benefits on school outcomes. The academic benefits of speech and debate are indisputable, and P-122 saw them as an obvious conclusion from students' involvement in the activity.

> It absolutely has an academic benefit; that's sort of the obvious. Speech and debate students do better in school than they would if they didn't do speech and debate.

P-116 observed that disadvantaged students could benefit from the language skills learned in speech and debate. P-116 said that disadvantaged African American students struggle with academic English language skills that can be remedied through speech and debate.

> For African American students, I always thought that they were learning the language too because the way they can speak at home or the way they speak in the playground, that's not academia. There is something else that they need, and there's a way you can get it, and you can do it through speech and debate.

P-106 highlighted how those academic benefits positively impact students' test scores.

> Debate helps students to learn how to compartmentalize what they're learning and organize it better and reproduce it when it's time to do an essay or when it's time to take a test.

Those academic benefits extend to students' higher educational attainments. P-121 said that speech and debate students are likely to attend college and are better positioned to win scholarships.

> The college attendance rates for those that debate and don't are like night and day. It increases the probability that you go to college by like sixty something percent, and the probability that you get a scholarship goes up exponentially.

P-114 supported the competitive advantage that speech and debate offer. He echoed P-121's sentiments that scholarship opportunities are greater among the speech and debate population.

> It just gives you more opportunity to win more money and be more well-rounded and stand out when you're applying for those scholarships.

Health Promotion

The majority of participants acknowledged health promotion as a benefit (68%). Speech and debate professionals often cited the mental health benefits of self-esteem, self-worth, and confidence gained from speech and debate. For instance, P-123 explained how students internalize their value through the confidence they gain.

> It gives a lot of those children the confidence that the information they can provide is valuable and worthy of being heard to various audiences.

Others spoke about the health benefits of emotional regulation and the ability to displace harmful activities through debate. P-105 explained how speech and debate offers students an outlet:

> What a positive outlet for somebody to become obsessed with speech and debate and find that sense of belonging.

A unique revelation was how speech and debate bolstered health promotion by fostering students' awareness and cultivating their resilience. In particular, speech and debate participation enable students to improve their health and control their lives by helping them identify their triggers, voice their personal and societal problems, and overcome their challenges.

Identify Triggers. P-123 noted that some topics and conversations might trigger stressful reactions from students.

> To take on the debate, it takes on a lot in terms of the amount of time you have to invest, and not to mention the emotional connection to the conversations that we have can be stressful.

In addition to the stress triggered by some of the content students engage with, P-111 explained that students also discover maladaptive behaviors that are not always on the surface. He explained that stress management is necessary to confront behaviors that are present.

> Debate in some ways, I mean it's not just particular to debate, but when you're in a situation where you have to interact with other people, you see, parts of your personality come out and manifest themselves. In a given situation, a student may notice, they tend to run a fight-or-flight mechanism, or they might be very confrontational when you put them on the spot. And so, in some ways it kind of reveals a little bit more of what we actually are. It also provides a platform, a method, or a place to kind of deal with those issues. Stress management is huge.

Voicing Personal and Societal Concerns. Debate, in many ways, helps students to understand themselves better. P-113 explained how speech and debate participation encourages students to disclose personal information; "It promotes a lot of personal revelations from kids." For example, P-126 explained how students deeply want to voice their concerns.

> Middle school students, in particular, are among the most subjectively unheard. They feel like they are unheard in a deep way. That population of students is ready to be heard. Any activity that can get them in front of people expressing their opinions or other people are listening to them and engaging with those opinions in a meaningful way, that's amazing. I think debate and speech together are uniquely powerful for middle school students.

Students voice their concerns in many ways. P-112 talked about students who disclose their true personal identities for the first time in speech and debate.

> I had a number of kids on my team come out as queer, come out as trans, come out as addicts, come out [as] depressed, anxious, having eating disorders.

P-118 similarly found that students will tell her about all kinds of stressful issues they are experiencing in their lives.

> They're not afraid to tell you who they are, what they're experiencing at home or being afraid of coming out or sharing all the different problems that students and young people today are sharing.

Then there are students who are distressed by what is happening in society. The societal and systemic civil rights issues in society are loudly presented in speech and debate spheres. P-120 explained that students begin to think about the structures that interact with their own community.

> Several years ago, I was working at a charter school network and the debate topic for the year was education reform, and so the young women who were a part of my debate team, who were all African American women, began to study about proposals for reform in the education system, and they began to think about their own place in the education system. It raises their consciousness to think about what kinds of systems we are dealing with, even here in the school system that we are a part of.

Resilience to Overcome Challenges. Despite their challenges, students develop a portable life skill in the form of resilience that can serve them throughout their lives. P-112 explained how students learn to persist through defeat, saying that "learning how to pick yourself up when you fail" is important

Despite challenges in speech and debate, P-104 explained how participation brings forth resilience:

> PI: So the question is, what are the benefits of speech and debate for students?
>
> P-104: In the competitive environment, it is a vacuum, where the students aren't necessarily advocating for something that will actually change something at the end of the day. It's a controlled environment, but this also means that there's a winner and a loser to every debate round. So, students, particularly students that are attracted to debate naturally, are ones that I have seen don't have a lot of "failure" in their lives. Like a lot of them, some of the ones that are naturally attracted to debate are just like "I love this," but once they get into a debate round, they recognize that they're not always the smartest kid in the room. There's a big process to learn how to lose and not letting that be the end point of an activity or something that you're trying to achieve. I think that debate, in particular, gives students a lot of resilience. In a debate round loss, you get feedback from a judge and maybe an educator or an instructor. So instead of a loss being a failure and somewhere to stop, you have this feedback [so] that you [can] tinker [with] the areas you need to work on. Then it ends up being better the next time.

P-105 observed that the resiliency developed through the self-editing process that is inevitable in speech and debate cultivates mental toughness in students.

> I think speech and debate [help build] a specific type of resilience, where you have to do so much to get ready, and then you might win, you might lose. Then you have to do it again. And I think for a lot of people who've experienced this learning to deal with loss and disappointment and self-editing and growth, the idea of okay, I did this, and it turned out this way, and then I did this, and it turned out this way. There's something about the resilience and mental toughness and agility that is developed in speech and debate; I can't think of anything else [that offers that]."

Students have many opportunities through debate to practice the resilience necessary for life. As P-114 explained, the challenges encountered in debate are a prototype to what is happening in society.

> The debate and speech community is a microcosm of the bigger society…. The debate and speech community is this little bubble, and everything is going to be utopian and that the scoring is fair. There is no bias, and that if you got a loss, it is because it's justified. We definitely don't look at the bigger picture in terms of the fact that we are still in society, and so those problems that are systemic in society are definitely systemic within the debate and speech community.

P-121 shared his story on how he practiced confronting the endemic biases and prejudices in society through speech and debate rounds.

> I can debate in front of a room of rural farmers or some other culture that is just there for a Saturday. They might be a little prejudiced, and I can't control that. I have to do what I have to do to try to get that balance, and that intellectual challenge of trying to figure out how to crack that code was really what I live for. And that's what I really like, even still to this day in my life, being somebody that wants to be involved in politics. So ultimately that's a skill that never ends. I'm always trying to figure it out, "How can I get this person that normally has no reason to trust me and has these pre-existing biases to support me or at least listen?" That's something that I really liked, and I think is an important skill to have.

RQ2: Curricular Attributes

The second research question explored the curricular attributes of a successful speech and debate program. Participants spoke about the pedagogical approach (88%) that is essential to implementing quality instruction, the hard skills (72%) that students learn, and the socioemotional soft skills (36%) learned as part of a well-rounded program (see Appendix F).

Pedagogical Approach

What Do You Teach? Participants recognized the importance of including students' cultural references in speech and debate instruction. To facilitate culturally relevant speech and debate instruction, P-114 said it is an iterative process that requires coaches to get to know their students and the school community:

> There are no set curricula. You can't just go sit there and teach debate and speech, you have to learn your students' demographic, you have to love students, you have to learn the current school demographic [and] the school culture. Then you can kind of mold your curriculum, and a lot of times that changes from year to year.

P-103 talked about the importance of debating with dignity and respect for everyone when asked about the attributes of a successful program:

> PI: What would you say are the most important outcomes of a successful program?
>
> P-103: Okay. That's a good question. I always say that from the very beginning, this is a space where we can talk just about anything. Unless there is a person who feels uncomfortable, this is a space where students can ask just about any question they want or that they have. And so, I think one positive outcome for a successful program is creating a space where students feel safe to be curious and have their curiosity embraced and responded to in a positive manner. I think that's one aspect of a successful program. I think that another aspect is (pause) I feel that our one goal is to debate with dignity and respect for everyone, and so we definitely focus on anti-racism, we focus on culturally relevant pedagogy, we also focus on justice, racial justice, economic justice, social justice. I think that an important part of the program is that students are able to debate with dignity and respect for everyone, their opponents as well as the people who they're talking about in relation to the issues.

Similarly, P-105 discussed the benefits of having an organized curriculum and how the term *culturally responsive* has myriad definitions yet is necessary to incorporate into the debate space.

> PI: What do the attributes of a successful curriculum look like? What does the curriculum look like as it progresses from phase one to phase two, through multiple phases to get students ready?
>
> P-105**:** Hmm…that's a really great question. I will say that for a long time, I don't think there really was a traditional curriculum for debate. In the last couple of years new leadership with the Urban Debate League have really pushed that in a way that I think is really helpful because...it's really helpful to have a safety net of a bunch of things. [There

> are all kinds of skills now and it is constantly developing organically. That's been a huge push and I will say remote learning, despite all of its challenges, for professional development of what debate coaches should be teaching, it has been better. Now we're also good at going on zoom and we're so good at sharing resources and engaging. It used to be that you'd have to get people in the room together for a physical PD once or twice a year. Whereas we've started now, as a group of coaches, to having weekly meetings. Just pop in and if you can't come, watch the recording. Now we are able to sort of systematize and norm some of the best practices, and we've learned that maybe the other person's perspective is better than yours. You think, well, why didn't I think of that, that's a really great way of doing it. The other thing we've been talking a lot about is materials, lessons, and approaches [that are culturally responsive]. That term culturally responsive is a really loaded term and it's really important, and it means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. I think that debate is one of the best things to make culturally responsive.

How Do You Teach? The approach for teaching speech and debate is multifaceted. P-112 explained that the teaching style that is used trumps the content that is taught: "It's less about what you teach and more about how you teach it." Professionals have suggested the importance of maintaining small and fun courses that offer a safe space for students to learn. When asked what is necessary to develop quality speech and debate programs in schools, P-107 highlighted many curricula approaches to maintain students' engagement. He explained that students enjoy working in small groups collaboratively on goal-oriented tasks and teachers create material for more advanced students.

> PI: What is it that you need to make it really feasible to make sure that people are on board, and that they make this happen? In the school setting, what's required to make sure that it's a successful, quality program?
>
> P-107: Is this in terms of engaging the teachers, engaging the students or both?
>
> PI: Both.
>
> P-107: Well, in terms of the students, for engagement with the elementary kids, we have a pretty strong emphasis on not talking for more than four or five minutes before they do something. So, we try to get them talking, doing the examples of what we're talking about. They really like to interact with each other, and so, giving them time pretty darn frequently where they're interacting with each other. Like, maybe a team is preparing their cases or there's some problem to work on together: How do you make this the best argument or go research this, so the kids work together to do that. I would say that's one

> of the biggest things we do to try to get them engaged and it really works. The second thing is, and this is hard to do beyond the programs we have. We try to keep the ratio of our staff to students to about one staff member to six to eight students. Doing that keeps the kids on pace, keeps them engaged at all times, because then they can do their practices, and you know, instead of waiting for the twentieth to speak, I think that really helps. With the teachers, I haven't thought about that fully. Even though I provide PowerPoints to instruct our staff, they are welcome to use their own material. Most of the time that happens when they work with the more experienced kids. They'll do some of their own little mini-lectures and activities with the kids.

By contrast, P-118 emphasized the need to create a loving and authentic space for students to thrive:

> You can have all the facts in the world laid out for you, you can have all the outlines, all the material, everything you're supposed to read, but the one thing that an educator has to have is heart. They have to have heart! They have to have love in their heart for their kids, and it has to be genuine because kids know the difference. They know the difference when somebody's real and when they're just blowing smoke.

Similarly, P-105 explained that he could expect much more of his students as long as he earned their trust:

> I look back and realize that I was underestimating the students' abilities and realizing that I could be a lot more demanding if I earned their trust. I have to earn their trust, or I can't really do anything.

Levels of Intensity and Engagement. In addition to creating an environment that is conducive to learning, a heavily emphasized approach is differentiating the learning to impact the intensity and engagement that are offered to primary school students.

Level of Intensity. Participants acknowledged a structured and guided teaching style as favorable to implementing and sustaining quality programs. P-105 explained that his instructive approach has benefited from having a structured and scaffolded curriculum because it offers safety and flexibility to evolve.

> In the last couple years, there's new leadership with the Urban Debate League. They have really pushed that in a way that is really helpful. It's really helpful to have a safety net of—here's the next topic, here's the next set of skills, and then in the second year, here's what you should do. And this is constantly developing organically.

Additionally, differentiation in intensity was also reinforced in the divisions and formats students entered. P-127 explained how students were placed in divisions that aligned with their abilities.

> We definitely intentionally tried to scaffold things. That's also built into the way that tournaments run out here. The way I explain it to parents is that it's like wrestling matches where you have hundred-pound wrestlers only wrestle against hundred-pound wrestlers; they don't wrestle against the three-hundred-pound people. So, we have middle school divisions, we have high school novice divisions, we have junior varsity divisions, and we have varsity divisions.

Moreover, P-109 considered the intensity level for various formats of speech and debate to place students into developmentally appropriate styles. She explained how younger students participate in formats that offer more team support and fewer philosophically-laden topics.

> We have introductory, intermediate, and the high level. Parliamentary debates are where students team up for three-on-three debate and then, when they get more comfortable, we have them start to learn public forum debate, which is two-on-two. Then, when they go to higher level, they can learn Lincoln-Douglas debates, so for each level—they are waiting to do something new, where they get more philosophical and deeper….

Similarly, P-115 explained that her younger students participate in parliamentary and will now have the opportunity to graduate to events that involve more policy.

> We prioritize the three versus three parliamentary system, then we've branched off to add in public forums at the middle school level, and then with the high school team we're jumping into speech events. We're going to jump into Lincoln-Douglas, Congress, Policy debate. We have an active model United Nations team as well, which is really related to a lot of the policies, and all of it started from the demand for debate.

Levels of Engagement. The scaffolded learning approach was also revisited when participants spoke about the level of engagement available to students. P-113 observed the value of offering different levels of engagements for students who wanted more intensity.

> The advanced work might happen outside of school hours. If kids want to do advanced work, they can go to a tournament or two and get that competitive piece, but it'll be more intramural in the class.

The intramural environment for some of the participants was so valuable that they highlighted the need to have speech and debate embedded in every class. P-112 shared her strong conviction for incorporating debate across the curriculum.

> What do I think middle school students particularly ought to be taught? I like the concept of debate across the curriculum.

The same sentiments were shared by P-119, who said that debate promotes deep learning of information, and so it should be a central part of students' school day curriculum.

> Why shouldn't we be using debate in every classroom and every subject to motivate students to engage that material and, more importantly, to embrace a rich and deep understanding of that material? I think debate as an afterschool activity is wonderful, but it is hiding one of the most powerful educational tools that you have from where it belongs: the classroom. It should be in every classroom.

When asked where in the school space would speech and debate be best suited, P-115 responded by discussing the positive outcomes that humanities teachers were experiencing from embedding debate structure into their school day lessons.

> PI: Is this something that can be run during the day, or is it better at other times?
>
> P-115: Debate became so popular that we actually thought about making it a class.… The humanities department at our school started to incorporate debate into their lessons. So, the kids who are debaters on the debate team rise to the top when it comes to those in class debates. They appreciate the structure of debate, as opposed to saying so, "How do we all feel about civil disobedience?"; if you do that, you are asking for a tidal wave. Debate brings structure to the lessons, and so a lot of the humanities teachers that are in the school really took a hold of it, and I've talked about it with them because it helps them be better teachers.

Reviewing the feedback for tournament participation is a good tool to help students improve. To that end, when asked about the curriculum attributes of a good program, P-123 explained that laying out the short- and long-term goals, as related to tournaments, is necessary for monitoring students' progress in debate.

> What is a tournament? How do we understand how tournaments work? What are the roles of the competitors? How do you win a tournament? How do tournaments evaluate performance? Pretty much laying out that formative summation of what are we trying to assess when determining success in the debate.

Thus, once students return from competitions, P-113 said it is up to the coach to use the ballots as a guide to inform instruction.

> If you had to pick one thing about this activity that makes everybody better, it's learning to receive feedback and then do something constructive with it. When you write a paper or you take a class or you do a performance, you've done it, and it's put aside. You get an A, B, or C on it, then move on. You did the show, got a good review, it's over. When you do speech and debate, you take those critiques and those ballots home. And if you've got a good coach, you look at those and use [them] to do a review every week.

Technicalities of Speech and Debate (Hard Skills)

Modeling

P-111 talked about the importance of modeling so students can have practical understanding of the expectations.

> Just on a practical level, you can read all the handouts and resources, but unless you've seen it and you know what's going on, it's hard to make sense of any of it. It's a practical or clinical experience. Just seeing the debate, seeing how they work, seeing how the teacher does it—having a clear model and understanding is probably the most helpful way to really put things together.

Similarly, P-106 supported the value of modeling and many practice debates to show students the difference between an argument and a debate.

> A lot of modeling, so the very first month, you're doing mock debates on whatever they're interested in. It doesn't even matter, you know. I don't really get into the debate topic unless I'm talking to a debate team. But when it comes to teaching debate, it's just any topic under the sun and modeling what the difference between an argument and a debate….

Modeling is further emphasized by P-121, who said that the essential part of learning debate involves watching others. P-121 explained that students who watch great speakers and debaters learn to develop their own style.

> I think the biggest thing is when you're teaching a group of individuals to put the priority on style and literature first. One of the things I think is really important in debate, you need to find your voice before you do anything. I don't think debaters watch enough and I don't just mean watching other debaters and other competitors. Watch old presidential debates, watch debates between intellectuals in public, for the content, for the style, so you can have your own.

Argumentation and Research. According to P-115, the instruction for students focuses on teaching students to use evidence to support claims as opposed to relying on mere emotion as argumentation.

> …it taught them a lot about research, about how to be a good writer, and also how to be a constructive critic. Instead of yelling at someone and telling them they're stupid, you had to realize that if you are not strategic, you're going to get dismissed. So, I taught them about how to hold in their emotions and not explode. A lot of them were geared towards that.

P-112 felt that analysis of evidence was an essential skill to teach students, with an emphasis on writing and delivering.

> How to find scholarly articles, how to discern the wheat from the chaff, like how to discern if something is misinformation and fake news that is increasingly important. And how to rebut it if it is.… Plus expository writing, thesis with supporting arguments—claim, warrant, impact.

P-117 did not have direct experience working with middle school, yet he offered a perspective of his experiences observing them at tournaments. He agreed that teaching middle students research so they can deliver sound arguments is an essential part of speech and debate. However, P-117 did not feel as if middle school students were being trained to build research skills; rather, they were just being given content to read. His revelation started by the following prompt in which he was asked to discuss his experiences with middle school students.

> PI: I imagine you have a lot of perspective from looking at the different entering ninth grade students that had middle school speech and debate experience versus those that did not. Do you see any distinctions among the groups of students?
>
> P-117: I don't believe I ever worked with any debate students that had prior development. There were maybe a few students that had a teacher that would engage in a debate type

> activity in their classroom and for those that really pursued debate, it whetted their appetite; it enticed them into the activity, and they were standing at the door ready to go. So, I don't have much response on students who had prior development. In the debate association, we had a middle school-level program, and they ran alongside the high school activity. I always made arguments that those that were doing that we're doing an injustice because they were doing too much of the work; they were giving prepared things. From my perspective, I thought that those middle schoolers were not getting the research capacity and the preparation capacity for debate. They were getting more the speech. I saw far too many coaches at that level just handing material and saying, "Okay, here's what you say in this speech, and here's what you're saying in that speech," and to me, that deleted the debate experience. Because like an iceberg, giving the speeches in the round is just the top ten percent. The rest of the real debate occurs in the research.

As a retort to P-117's views, P-114 spoke about the differential instruction that was necessary for students who were struggling academically.

> I literally had to go through their debate cases and sit there and break down the words and change the evidence. We would sit there and highlight the evidence because, even if they struggled, they can still get to the gist of it. We would write analyses for the students so that they could sit there and better explain it. And they can make those connections based off of what they understood and still be able to debate and develop that critical thinking. The more you have students that have learning disabilities and behavior disabilities, the more you've got to break down that curriculum.

Social-Emotional Training (Soft Skills)

While 100% reported the benefits of social-emotional competence in students who participated in speech and debate, 36% of the participants explicitly included soft skills in their curriculum. When designing the students' speech and debate curriculum, P-123 was careful to incorporate the social and emotional goals that students have for themselves.

> I need to make sure that when I'm implementing my curriculum, it's meeting the scholars halfway. So, in this case, again to answer your question, it first starts by understanding the goals of the scholars outside of just intellectual and competitive success. We have to constantly think about what is the social and emotional goals that our students want to achieve when they take on an endeavor like speech and debate.

Similarly, P-110 saw the importance of having elementary and middle school students learning skills that have positive implications in the real world. As students work together to develop arguments, P-110 explained that her curriculum focuses on conduct to improve team dynamics.

> I feel like it's really important for middle schoolers to learn how to take it out into the world, so we teach…conduct or public speaking skills, argumentation reputation, and the ability to work with teammates to create arguments that are similar but not the same, and to support one another.

These soft skills are emotionally protective. P-115 talked about the inevitable disappointment that all students will experience. He teaches his students how to lose gracefully by displaying sportsmanship to their opponents.

> We teach them about sportsmanship because sometimes it doesn't go their way. I've had kids walk out of debates saying, "Piece of cake, we crushed them," and then they get back in there, the judge sides with the other side because of one thing, and they're crushed. How do they hold those emotions in and not come to me and say the other team cheated, you know? We don't use the C word in our team: cheated.

Sometimes the soft skills of adaptability that determine the outcome of a round are not easy to teach, but they are necessary to learn. P-111 explained how he had to teach his students to read the room.

> I remember there's a moment where in a tournament we had to go into a teachers' lounge and...I realized, I have to kind of talk a little bit, at least a little bit, about the atmosphere of the room or looking at your judge, and if they seem like they're going with you, keep going. If they seem disinterested or kind of veering off, pause, take a breath, explain it again, or give an example to try to win them over. And then I started implementing a system where I had students judge each other, so they would know what they were looking for as a judge.

RQ3: Feasibility

The third research question explored the factors that influence the feasibility of a successful speech and debate program. There were four main findings: time (88%), money (64%), training (56%), and pandemic (56%) (see Appendix G).

Time

P-106 emphasized the importance of meeting with students several times a week to help them grow in speech and debate.

> The only way to do very well is when you have three full practices a week for a couple hours a day. I think it's nice to have once a week practice, maybe twice a week practice. But the results come when you have three to five days a week of practice and when you do have that amount of practice, the students have to be dedicated.

When P-111 was asked about what he needed to ensure the feasibility of a program, he had a detailed list of resources, and he emphasized a need for time.

> PI: In terms of feasibility, what do we need to resource a program?
>
> P-111: Time, space, laptops, teacher pay. Real talk, last year I volunteered the entire year because the budget for extracurriculars was cut.… That was a few hundred hours for the year that I just did because I enjoy debate, the kids love it too, and then I wanted to keep momentum going.… I know that a lot of coaches probably just did a pro bono because although things have lifted a lot now, in November, December, January, those months were rough and kids and adults and people were just in a downswing of mood and anxiety. So, debate really kept us together and kids would just come and talk to me all the time in office hours. Our practices, although they're technically from four to six, go on to like seven, and then kids might just stay chatting until eight, so it just provided a place for us to kind of be a community. So yeah, help the teachers out, I would say that would be awesome, laptops for the research, space, because when you have a team, you need a place to meet.

While P-111 was willing to offer excessive pro bono work to ensure the survival of his debate programs, P-122 had a more cautionary approach. She emphasized the need to manage her time, so speech and debate did not prevent her from achieving her family and work goals.

> PI: How do you think administrators play a part in evening out the playing field for students?
>
> P-122: I am an administrator.… I'm the head of business, legal, enrollment, finance, HR all the good stuff of running the business of a school.… I had these big ideas. I'm going to start this debate team; it's going to be in middle school. Everyone's going to get debate in class, we're going to have slam poetry sessions. I was like, I'm the administrator, I can do this. I can do anything I want. And I had a list of other things beyond debate.… But we're five years in and COVID didn't help. It's so hard to do those things. I get two hundred emails a day.… Coaching speech and debate the first year, I was there three nights a week and we had about ten tournaments. The second year, I was there two nights a week because half the time.… I've really pared it down.… I'm a doer, I'm a type A personality, I'm a very capable person, I could do it. I just would have to give up, in this case, family, HR concerns, which is not going to happen. So, I need someone a tier or two down, like an assistant principal would be perfect or a director. We have, a director of whole child or like an Activities Coordinator.… I don't see parents as the problem,

> they're always "Sure, that sounds great!" I don't see kids as the problem, they're always going to try things if you bring them to them with a great attitude. It's just that initial lift and then, if you're going to get into the outside competition, it's the time. And that's why I'm still so frustrated. I was going to do student council and do all these things, and it can't happen. I don't have the capacity. It's so frustrating.

On the other hand, P-115 has found time management to be easier among a group of experienced students. He expects his current students to work independently, so he limits scheduled meetings with students to once a week, yet twice a week when competition is nearing.

> PI: How much time do you need to make this happen?
>
> P-115: Well, since my kids are conditioned, I only really need to meet with them for one hour a week to get them ready and check in on them. They do a lot of independent research themselves based on the teams that they form. For the younger kids, I could meet with them twice a week if I needed to get them ready. But afterschool activities for debate is only one hour a week for kids and that's with me; it doesn't mean that they only do that. They're always researching, and I give them little homework assignments to keep them on task.

Financial Support

P-113 explained how fundraising exacerbated the lack of work balance that existed for her as a coach:

> Everything from the practical to the pedagogical is part of what you learn by doing it for a long time, or if you're lucky you get some basic training at the front end and you build from that, but you've got to have time. It's got to be part of your job and not just your passion. Honestly that's what drove me out of the activity. It became harder to stay funded as the team got more successful and, ironically, it became an impediment to my developing my own career, which I had to do for my family's sake. I got to the point where too much was taken away; I was spending seventy-five percent of my time as a fundraiser. I don't mind doing some of that, but I have to do other things.

To reduce the stress that may arise from limited funds, P-123 felt that schools need the support of other financial stakeholders to join the mission of having debate in schools. P-123 explained that school funds are stretched among many competing interests, so the financial support that debate teams receive needs to extend outside of the school.

> Schools are fighting every day to figure out how they're going to spend their funds per pupil on education, and because of COVID, the expenses are growing. We're always in debate competing against the robotics team, the wrestling team, the photography club. I do think, however, that schools can't be the only institutional stakeholder responsible for building this dream into a reality.

According to P-113:

> It was time for me to step away and I had gone in and pretty much begged my administrators and said make me not have to fight for everything. Make this my livelihood and I will coach till the day that I die. My name was inextricably linked to the school where I work and they were just like, "Oh, you know, I just don't see how we can come up with this $10,000 this year," and it was like, are you kidding me? You spend more than that to groom the football field in the summer.

By contrast, P-115 did not find funds to be an issue at his school. He was treated as an invaluable member of the school community. He further explained that some places view the debate coach with the same reverence as they do a football coach.

> A lot of schools will give a stipend to their debate coach the same as they give a stipend to the football coach, so I'm sure that money plays a role into it as well. But for a lot of people, debate is their identity at their school. I'm an administrator, but if I gave up debate, if there is another teacher that we hired that said, I love debate, I want to be a debate coach, I would have no problem passing the torch. But it would take the community a long time, I think, to watch that torch being passed, because it's a big part of my identity at the school. A debate coach in some places is the equivalent of a football coach. You are that known and valuable to a school community.

Training

P-107 explained that elementary and middle school teachers could get a program off the ground with limited training.

> For high school and college, you could probably get away with a two- or three-day training session and they'd be good to go with maybe follow-up questions. With the middle school and elementary [teachers], honestly, I think just a couple hours and they'd be ready to go.

After some basic training or by learning experientially, P-113 believed that teachers need to have the ability and desire to make speech and debate part of their job.

> The pedagogical is part of what you either learn by doing it for a long time, or if you're lucky, you get some basic training at the front end and you build from there. But you have to have time, it's gotta be part of your job, and not just your passion.

P-110 explained that the schools she worked with made it part of the teacher's job. Additionally, she found that it was helpful to provide teachers with a detailed and scripted speech and debate curriculum. P-110 observed that having a lead teacher who is trained reduces teachers' reservations about delivering lessons.

> I think it's intimidating for teachers. What we really try to do is to build the curriculum. We have scripts on every single lesson, so anybody, with or without a debate program, can use it. That's constantly what we're trying to do—is simplify it so anybody can teach it. But I think it can be intimidating.

P-104 highlighted the importance of teachers receiving support from the school. She believed that teachers can still operate programs without professional development, yet having teachers receive guidance from others with experience would be a great way for schools to show their sustained support.

> Allowing teachers to get professional development for this is not necessary, but it's a really good part of the administrative support that can happen to learn how to coach speech and debate. That's the model we use as we try to train the trainer, so they can do it. Then we support them throughout the year by running tournaments but also providing, every once in a while, some instructional support by sending some college students that have learned or had participated in debate to help with practices. So having sustained support at the school is number one.

Regarding the pandemic, P-105 said that it has actually made training easier.

> That remote learning for all of its challenges, for professional development, for coaches on the debate supports of what is the curriculum and what should you be teaching has been better. Because now we're all good at going on Zoom, and we're so good at sharing resources and engaging with it. It used to be that you'd have to get people in the room together for a physical PD once or twice a year.… Now as a group of coaches, [we] have weekly meetings. Now it's like we were able to sort of systematize, norm, some of the best practices.

Pandemic

Overall, participants saw an increase in student participation during the pandemic. For students who did not fare as well, the drivers were technology and the home environment. Despite the various challenges that remote learning presents, many providers adjusted to emphasize the skills that could be honed through the distance learning environment.

Impact of Technology and Home Environment. P-126 discussed how both technology and the home environment contributed to various experiences during the pandemic.

> You know, I heard varying stories. I think there is absolutely a drop-off in students who don't have great access to technology. But most of all, a drop-off in students who don't feel like they have a safe and reliable place to work, so a lot of folks are sharing rooms with other people. They just don't have a place where they can be in a debate round for an hour and a half straight and know that they are going to be undisturbed and with a solid WIFI connection. That's a big ask for a lot of families, and so those students, of course, did have to drop. That's a big and important loss, particularly for an Urban Debate League because that's exactly the population you want to reach the most.

P-107, who services more suburban students, was more optimistic about the online environment. Despite the struggles the pandemic has created for some students, he explained that it led to a spike in participation following the start of the pandemic.

> What I found was that the vast majority of the kids, they would prefer in person, but they thrive just fine in the online environment. There were a small number of kids that just really weren't that interested in debate. But I kind of think the online environment probably made it harder for them to engage and made it more likely they would quit or just not put their whole heart into it. In terms of our numbers...our numbers just jumped dramatically, and we actually have hundreds of kids in our afterschool program in April and May. That's probably eight times the number we'd had.

P-123's views were similar to P-107 in pointing out that everyone did not have the same experiences. However, P-123's tone was more somber.

> …if you're talking about kids that have the technology means to engage in virtual spaces similar to how they're able to do that in classrooms, some people will say the remote experience was totally okay. "I get to wake up late a little later. I get to compete in front of my screen and everything is all good." But for the kid that lives in a digital desert, it was horrendous. Mind you, I have kids where we give them the technology. We give

them the laptops. We give them all the things they need for a remote debate, but yet they still can't get on because of where they live.

On the other hand, P-120 was among the group of participants who emphasized the positive outcomes of the pandemic, particularly as it relates to technology.

> Our numbers have increased by almost twofold, two hundred percent, and the reason that they've increased is that, instead of seeing moving away from brick-and-mortar tournaments as a problem, we saw it as an opportunity. We have ways we can reach students now that we never could have before.

Similarly, P-103 stated the virtual environment has made it easier to transition from different parts of the school day and to incorporate additional practice sessions.

> It was positive because the group leaders and the students are coming from different places—and so transitioning from day school to afterschool or transitioning to additional practices has been really easy. Easy in terms of accessible.

Students' home environment also impacted their speech and debate participation. Both P-126 and P-103 explained the importance of space. P-126 said limited space contributes to the drop-off in participation.

> Most of all, a drop-off in students who don't feel like they have a safe and reliable place to work; a lot of folks are sharing rooms with other people.

By contrast, P-103 said the home environment contributes to students' feelings of comfort.

> The virtual space, sometimes I think people might feel more confident being in their virtual space. It's not like one student standing up in front of a classroom with eighteen people. They're in the comfort of their own homes and spaces. So, I think that's been positive as well.

Adapting to the Landscape

P-120 explained how students were offered opportunities to participate in asynchronous events because of the pandemic.

> And we also changed the game to fit the student instead of asking the student to adjust to the game, so we thought, what are the skills that we want students to have? And one of the skills is learning how to do public speaking, and we realized that students can't go to a tournament always, and so we set up Flip Grid and other platforms so students would

> do quick asynchronous speeches during the week, and then we would do award ceremonies, but they could upload the speech anytime they wanted to.

Changing the structure and goals of participation has its benefits. P-111 explained that the challenges of the pandemic are that students did not develop their impromptu speech skills in the same way; however, they were able to increase their research skills.

> Because everything was online, a lot of kids were reading off their speeches, more so than thinking on their feet. So, this year, we had to go a little more towards the research route because, if one team has a whole ton of facts and you don't, you're not coming out of that alive. So, knowing how to weigh the facts or how to pit them against each other to attack credibility, those are certain skills I probably emphasized a bit more last year.

By contrast, P-124 viewed the loss of impromptu speaking development as a disadvantage.

> Yeah, and in our particular type of debate, which is parliamentary debate, we really lost an element of just thinking on your feet, and normally you walk into your debate round and you don't have a pile of notes with you. You can only take in one sheet of paper with some notes on it. And kids, you know, there's no way we could enforce that with the online, so we just had no rules about that. They had their whole speech written out, so it's basically like a speech-making competition, sometimes rather than debate, so the quality of the debate went way down.

RQ 4: Acceptability

The fourth research question explored the factors that speech and debate professionals described as influencing the acceptability of a successful speech and debate program. Five stakeholders were identified as being important in the support of speech and debate programs in schools: coaches/teachers, parents, school administrators, society, and students (see Appendix H).

Coaches/Teachers

Fifteen of the 25 respondents (60%) reported the importance of coaches and teachers. Of the 15 participants who discussed acceptability among coaches and teachers, there were two main findings: a love for the job and observable value. It was evident from the participants'

statements that having a love for coaching and enjoying the value that speech and debate brings to students are closely related.

As educators expressed their love, in many respects, they included the value that it brought to the students who participated. Educators who do this love being part of the positive impact on their students' lives. P-118 said that her career was a calling she loved, not a job.

> I had the most wonderful job. I really, really did. I loved it. It just put a lot of zip in my step every day I walked across the parking lot. I never thought of it really as a job; I thought of it as a calling.

The calling for the coaches is to help students flourish in various ways. When asked about the educators who get really excited about speech and debate, P-110 said that it is about empowering students.

> I think it's really important that the person loves to work with kids and shares that mission of wanting kids to be empowered, so that's important.

Similar sentiments were echoed by P-103, who said that educators want to see their students win.

> I think that they just want to see the students win. They're like we just want to see you win. We are educators and we want the best for you, and so I think that those stakeholders, sometimes it's selfless, it's not about them. They're like, "We just want to make sure we can help the next generation."

P-119 observed that when teachers learn how speech and debate motivates students to learn, they gravitate toward it. He referred to debate as a solution to the problem of a lack of motivation.

> I have to tell people I've got the easiest teaching job in the world, because the one thing I don't have to do is motivate students and that's the hardest part of teaching. Delivering content is easy, motivating students is hard, and so if you could find a pedagogy that motivates students, you are ninety percent of the way to success. So, you know what kind of teachers gravitate toward this? I think [it's] teachers who are obviously deeply committed to this, so their students are passionate about education. That's a great place to start.

P-115 found that incorporating debate strategies into his lessons improved his students' speaking and delivery skills.

> While I was there [overseas], it was a little controversial to develop critical thinking activities with university students. I really didn't know much about debate format at that point, but it was something I started to look into to. I started to implement certain debate strategies that would help students be more comfortable…speaking with an objective, with passionate dramatic speaking. From there, after I returned home, I kind of looked for a place to go where I could make a huge impact or a bigger impact.

Students

The two findings by participants—that educators love coaching and enjoy the value received by students trained in speech—were reportedly similar to students' reasons for pursuing the sport. For students, their love and enjoyment for the sport were reportedly related to the benefits accompanying the participation.

When responding to the acceptability of different stakeholders in speech and debate, 17 of the 25 respondents referenced students. Of those 17 participants, 100% referred to students acknowledging the value that speech and debate had in their lives, whether personal, intrinsic, or extrinsic rewards (see Appendix I).

A reciprocal relationship exists between the value that students get from speech and debate along with the motivation they have. According to P-119, students' quest for learning is ignited as they simultaneously acquire the tools along the way.

> Well, I think one of the powers of debating…is that it ignites that passion and curiosity while at the same time imparting tools.

P-110 observed that students see how debate has positively contributed to their personal growth: "I think that the students see the difference in themselves, they notice it; they feel it." P-106 spoke of the mutual enjoyment and value that students experience. He explained that it is a driving force for many students to continue speech and debate.

> They might say, you're telling me that every debater goes to college. Well, I want to go to college and get out of the hood, so I'm going to do debate. And they are very pragmatic.

P-106 went on to explain that debate motivates students to attend school.

> I had one girl sadly, she said, "This is the only reason why I come to school is because of debate. I don't want to do anything else."

A similar conversation about the association between value and motivation was raised by P-114, who explained how passion fuels students to pursue educational goals.

> They'll want to do the research, and they'll want to further their education if they develop that passion. But it's a matter of developing that passion and trying to get that fire.… Once they get that fire, everything else is gravy.

Overall, P-120 said that through speech and debate, students become self-driven learners who find opportunities to test their assumptions and examine areas that are relevant to their own lives.

> They become self-motivated learners, so that they're not simply motivated by a number that's assigned to them or some kind of external motivation; coercion, in the case of being forced to do something because of their parents or whatever. Students are being taught to pursue their own interests and questions, and so they become motivated, and then, second, it connects those questions; they can connect it to their own life.

Parents

Five of the 25 respondents (44%) reported the importance of parents. Of the 11 participants who discussed acceptability among parents, all of them reported value as a key motivator (100%) (see Appendix I). P-110 explained a conversation with a mother who had a hunch that debate might improve her son's interpersonal skills; her son wanted to pursue debate, despite being deep on the spectrum.

> My son says he really wants to do debate, but he's deep on the spectrum and his friends, kids don't like him in school; he doesn't know how to relate to them, but he really wants to do debate.

P-110 explained that the student's time spent in debate paid off. By his second year, he gave a speech heralding the benefits of speech and debate at an autism awareness event.

> His mom had taken him to an autism awareness meeting, and he stood up and spoke …in front of everyone, and his mom videotaped it on her camera and sent it to me. He said, "Debate has changed my life. Look at what I'm doing right now. I could never talk in front of anyone, and no one liked me because I didn't know how to tell them what I was thinking or feeling." Here's the final thing that's almost unbelievable. That year out of two hundred students at our annual tournament, he won best individual speaker. I mean, it's just almost unbelievable.

Once parents see the impact that speech and debate had in their children's lives, P-107 said they become the biggest supporters.

> When these parents see how it helps their kids, boy, I mean, some of them are bigger supporters of debate than I am. I get emails [saying] "You've helped my son gain so much self-confidence" [or] "She loves it; this is a chance for her to get her ideas out."

P-118 concurred with P-107's sentiments that parents are the biggest supporters once they realize the value that speech and debate offers.

> They supported the arts, they supported theater, they supported vocal and instrumental music, whether the orchestra and the speech and the debate programs, and they were the biggest, most influential people. Because once you get your parents on board, and you can give them that impetus to let them know the value of what you're doing and how you're trying to improve their son or daughter's lives, they will get on board with you.

P-124 highlighted that parents see the immediate benefit speech and debate has on their children's educational outcomes and its ability to displace negative activities.

> I think the driver for ninety percent of the parents is just probably helping their kid do better in school, maybe get into a better high school, get into a better college like that's a big one. They see it as a worthy activity. So many kids are playing video games and, you know, garbage like that all the time, so they see it as an activity that is worthy.

Fast forwarding to students' future selves, P-115 said that parents begin to realize the value speech and debate can have on students' vocational pursuits.

> They make it very clear at Microsoft that they love people who aren't cubicle gerbils. They want people who can be creative and communicate, more so than people who are just amazingly talented computer scientists, coders. So those people get hired a lot more

> than the people who are just really talented at finding bugs. So anyway, I think that the parents are starting to learn that, and they realize that it's much more important to be really good at being a good communicator than it is to just be really good at math.

Overall, P-103 reported that the comments she has received from parents have been supportive, despite the controversial topics that are often examined.

> We talk about some pretty controversial issues, but we always kept it real. You know, we talked about police brutality, we talked about educational justice, we talked about a number of issues, especially as they arose throughout the year, you know, online learning. And the parents and the family members were right there with us and said, you know, please (laughs), you know, we'll let our children be in this space. So, I think that's important.

However, not all parents accept the maturity of the topics that students learn, or they are opposed to their students learning ideologies contrary to their own. For instance, P-127 explained some parents are strongly opposed to debate instruction for their children because they do not want their children exposed to progressive perspectives.

> There are some parents who don't want their kids exposed to other points of view. In the 1980s, apparently Ralph Reed in the Christian Coalition tried to shut down debate programs all around the country, especially the South, so they put leaflets under the windshield wipers and mega-churches, because the idea was that they were teaching kids to question a moral framework and examine multiple sides of an issue. So, if you're any kind of fundamentalist, you don't want other people learning about other ways of thinking.

From the perspective of a parent and a coach, P-124 explained her ambivalence about the mature nature of some of the topics.

> We get a lot of fifth graders, and the only issue with that is some of the topics are really mature topics, and as a mom, I get really nervous about scaring the kids or exposing them to something that they're not ready for. Like we've had topics in our league about sexual assaults penalties or whether there should be a statute of limitations on sexual assault. Some parents get turned off by that.

School Administrators

Fifteen of the 25 respondents (52%) reported the importance of school administrators. Of the 15 participants who discussed acceptability among school administrators, the one main

finding was alignment. P-105 spoke about how important the alignment with the school vision is in having a flourishing speech and debate program. He said to facilitate that, there needs to be a wonderful collaboration between the teachers/coaches delivering the service and the school administrators who set the vision for their school.

> …I have to say it took off and really meant something to the population. And I feel like you couldn't replicate it in exactly the same way because it was so specific to the school. But I would say, the thing that I would want to be replicated, if anybody was starting a debate team in their school, is try to have a collaboration as good as mine [with the principal].

While communicating to a superintendent, P-117, who was a coach at the time, explained how speech and debate aligned with the mission of many schools in the district. In that conversation, the superintendent acknowledged the comprehensive benefits of the activity.

> Thirty years ago, it started to become popular to develop charter schools. After about three or four of them, I started to look at their mission statement, and I said to a superintendent of our school district, "Do you realize the mission statement they're writing could be the mission statement of the debate team? You know, through research, preparation writing and developed delivery...you are defining debate." At that point, that superintendent was like "You're right," this is an activity that embraces everything.

During the Common Core era, many administrators were able to see the benefits. P-119 explained the ease of getting schools to understand the value of speech and debate when Common Core was popular.

> [Common Core] shot through in just about every section with discussion of argument and the importance of arguments—from argumentative writing to argumentative thinking, reasoning skills, so it was a pretty easy sell at that point, because everybody was focused on Common Core and it was really easy to align the outcomes of competitive debate…with the Common Core standards.

Getting school administrators to see those benefits is not always simple. P-104 explained that the key to getting school administrators to capture how speech and debate aligns with their goals is by presenting the benefits concisely, so they quickly digest them.

> Sometimes the marketing of debate is pretty dense in terms of words and language, and principals and school district administration really don't want to sit there and read a long, dense, well researched [material]. They just want the hot points, and so that's one thing that we're trying to do is trying to create some visual infographic type of things to make principals understand how it meets various standards.

Having been an insider, P-126 understood how to identify and tap into school goals. As a previous schoolteacher, P-126 explained that in his tenure as a league administrator, he approached the schools from the perspective of aligning the speech and debate goals with the needs of the teachers. He touted debate as an activity that would positively engage students with loud voices.

> I was the guy who was getting schools on board at first, and so I think there is a difference in the way that I approach schools versus a lot of other folks. I was, from the very start, trying to approach it from the perspective of a teacher because that was my background. I was a teacher first. And to say not only academic benefits but really to say debate is a way to shift the way that the school responds to students who have loud voices.

The notion of using speech and debate to address the goals of the schools was reinforced by the administrators themselves. P-116 explained that speech and debate addressed the language proficiency goals she had for students while getting them excited about learning.

> I have the power to offer my students something more. [Educators] are always looking for something that will spark the kids' interest in coming to school and being open to learning. So, I always thought that speech and debate gave my students more opportunities to speak in the classroom. I always impressed upon my teachers that they need to speak; they need to spend more time talking to each other, talking to teachers to hash their ideas out loud. Teachers are always worried about whether or not children have enough vocabulary. But through speech and debate, they can increase their vocabulary; vocabulary should be developed naturally.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

After the report *A Nation at Risk* was issued in 1983, a series of education reforms aimed at improving student development followed. According to Rimm-Kaufman and Jodl (2020), education reform initiatives of the 21st century included the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the Common Core Standards of 2010, and the Every Student Success Act (ESSA) of 2015. These initiatives largely focused on the academic content students were expected to learn as they progressed through their K-12 education. However, neuroscience research has suggested that merging academic goals with emotional, cognitive, and social goals would better facilitate comprehensive development and lead to improved outcomes. Providing support that helps students remain motivated, manage their emotions, engage in improved peer relationships, persist through problems, and develop character traits that reinforce "honesty, integrity, or responsibility" facilitates growth in the areas of social, physical, and emotional domains (Rimm-Kaufman & Jodl, 2020, p. 30). However, when considering curricula that support student development, speech and debate has been overlooked as a reform intervention for far too long.

The benefits of speech and debate have been parsed out as civil literacy, academic success, and the development of critical thinking. However, this work suggesting the value of speech and debate as a tool for whole child development extends much further. Combining the cognitive and civic benefits with the research findings regarding the social-emotional, mental health, and psychological benefits implicates the conclusion that the tools gained in speech and debate have the potential to support health literacy and promotion in ways not initially considered. Reflecting back on the literature and participants' responses, it is clear that speech and debate training contributes to multiple aspects of the child, represented as the "whole child" perspective (Michael et al., 2015). For instance, the findings suggested that the ability to analyze

other people's narratives benefits students by helping them uncover their true selves while learning to channel negative energy into productive and oftentimes cathartic conversations. The findings further indicated that the trial-and-error expectations involved in speech and debate programming foster psychological benefits in the form of agency, growth mindset, and resilience. Even more salient is that health choice and decision-making skills may be bolstered through the acquisition of speech and debate skills. None of these ideas were initially considered.

Health Promotion (RQ1)

"Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over their health and its determinants and thereby improve their health," according to the WHO (2010). In creating opportunities for expression, speech and debate participation helps students increase control over their health—and take steps to improve it by confronting distressing thoughts and inspiring action. Many real-world examples demonstrate the impact of positive and negative self-expression, along with the dangers of remaining silent.

It would be wonderful to have a bird's-eye view into the minds of children and adolescents while they are wrangling with life issues. This insight could profoundly impact the quality of their current and future lives. Adults who understand the value of finding meaning in childhood experiences—particularly those experiences that continue to bring emotional distress—often turn to psychoanalysts for help. Psychoanalysis uses a retroactive approach to help patients introspect on their childhood memories. This assists them in developing a better understanding of themselves, alleviates emotional pain and confusion, and establishes effective coping mechanisms. Sigmund Freud, founding father of psychoanalysis, originated the therapy of helping clients uncover and resolve distressing thoughts and experiences (whether at a conscious or unconscious level) by talking about them. Commonly described as a "talking cure"

(Marx et al., 2017), this treatment method is not widely practiced today but is effective (Shedler, 2010).

> By employing the talking cure, or psychoanalysis, a therapist can help a patient dig into the destructive, hurtful issues in their unconscious minds, after which point they can deal with them. To be successful, this therapy usually means meeting with the analyst several times a week for months and maybe even years, depending on the person and their issues. (McManus, 2017)

Similar to the talking cure heralded by psychoanalysts, the expressive nature of speech and debate helps students acquire the words to explain and sort out confusion and distress. In addition, students become adept at sorting out and expressing their views due to the constant examination and reasoning that is a normal condition of speech and debate.

In examining the multiplicity of sides to a question or issue, students find that they are free to disclose truths about themselves. P-112 stated, "I had a number of kids on my team come out as queer, come out as trans, come out of addicts, come out as depressed, anxious, or having eating disorders." Having an opportunity to experience the richness of life, good or bad, through others' narratives, juxtapose them with their own, and express those ideas has profound benefits. P-112 continued, "Speech and debate teaches students that there are more than two sides to everything, and that there's a multiplicity of sides. That means for a lot of these kids they start questioning and acknowledging the multiplicity of identities that they have within them." Through speech and debate discussions, students find healthy ways to express those myriad and, in many cases, competing ideas.

Speech and debate was where P-121 first confronted many of the injustices he witnessed while growing up in North Philadelphia, in what he referred to as "the second poorest Congressional district in the country." Through speech and debate, P-121 learned how to navigate the politics that existed in and outside of the debate round. He also learned much about

life-privilege, class, and challenging the status quo. A series of unfortunate and racist events during high school nearly thwarted P-121's chances of qualifying to attend the prestigious Tournament of Champions (TOC), the crowning achievement of high school debate for many students. Rather than speaking of that time with disdain and regret, P-121 is now grateful for his early exposure to those transgressions.

P-121 qualified to attend TOC by earning a bid through an at-large application, which was voted on by the coaching community. He said, "The coaches ranked me number one, as a debater most deserving of the at-large." However, this set off an uproar in the community along with cyberbullying of P-121. He explained, "People were threatening. There were lots of racial comments being made about me." These included that he was not good enough and he only debated on race. The harassment experienced by P-121 could have spiraled out of control, as it does for many students who experience bullying, the most common expression of violence among peers during school-age years (Juvonen & Graham, 2014; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). Rather than escalating to violence, P-121 used speech and debate as a tool to release instead.

Bullying affects one in five students in the United States. In 2017, 20% of students between the ages of 12-18 reported being bullied in school (NCES, 2019). But this pervasive problem is no longer contained to physical spaces. More than 15% of high school students reported being cyberbullied in 2018 (CDC, 2019a). Bullying is the most commonly reported problem in public schools, with the highest prevalence rates experienced among middle school students at 22% (CDC, 2019a). The suicidal and homicidal outcomes of bully victimization are frightening. Evidence has indicated a strong association between bullying and suicide (CDC, 2014), which is the second leading cause of death in people ages 10 through 34 (CDC, 2019b). Additionally, nearly 75% of school shootings are linked to harassment and bullying (Shireen

et al., 2014). According to Stopbullying.gov (2021), 12 of 15 school shooters in the 1990s had been victims of bullying.

Despite what he was experiencing, P-121 took the advice of his coaches and used his platform to unleash his frustrations and make positive progress. P-121 "saved every penny, every screenshot, every post," and then used this information to make his case for TOC. P-121 proudly compared it to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s strategy during the Civil Rights movement. He chose not to suppress his anger, but to unleash his frustrations in an appropriate way that would have real impact. Thus, speech and debate empowered P-121 to express his convictions and channel his emotions as opposed to restraining himself, which might otherwise have escalated to the release of excessive bouts of anger.

The value of expression for mitigating anger and aggression has been backed by researchers from the University of Texas and the University of Minnesota (2011), who found a rise in aggression among participants who suppressed their emotional reactions (University of Texas at Austin, 2011). In the study, a mixed sample of army soldiers, military cadets, and college students watched a pair of notoriously classic movie scenes: One focused on excess gluttony from 1983's *The Meaning of Life* and the other involving a toilet bowl scene from 1996's *Trainspotting*. The researchers then asked a subset of those participants to restrain their emotions while another group was not restricted. In a subsequent competition, those asked to suppress their disgust were more aggressive than their non-restricted counterparts.

When the time came for P-121 to compete at the Tournament of Champions, he came back from losses on the first day with a renewed vigor and conviction on the second day, when he unleashed his pent-up frustration using a case titled "Miner's Canary." In the early 1900s, canaries, due to their sensitive respiratory systems, were used by mineworkers to indicate toxic

conditions in the mines. When the canaries stopped chirping or died, miners knew it was time to leave the mines or risk dying from the poison surrounding them. In his argument, P-121 called on the work of American civil rights theorist Lani Guinier, who used canaries in coal mines as a metaphor for political race. “The argument I made was that I was the miner’s canary in debate because I was informing the community that these practices were getting way too toxic; privilege was way too out of control, and they needed to listen to me or this thing was going to go,” he explained.

In doing so, P-121 also engaged in strategies that Chapman et al. (2013) found were protective of people’s health. In a nationally representative U.S. sample of adults over 18, Chapman et al. from the Harvard School of Public Health and the University of Rochester found that suppressing emotions shortened people’s lifespan. Over a span of 12 years, those who suppressed their emotions increased their risk of death from all causes (Chapman et al., 2013).

For P-121, speech and debate were freeing and a catharsis of sorts. It not only allowed him to express his frustration, but to do it from a platform that would send shock waves through the speech and debate community. While not everyone has the opportunity to express their views from such large platforms, the size of the audience is not the primary concern. The expression is.

This is further exemplified by the experience of Anne Frank, a teenage Jewish girl hidden in an attic in Nazi-occupied Holland in the 1940s. Even expressions to an audience of one, as in the case of Anne’s diary, can penetrate the hearts and souls of many. In the words of Alejandro Baer, Anne’s story plays “a vital role in the history of Holocaust memory, or Holocaust public consciousness, in the U.S. and then globally.” People who have participated in speech and debate well understand the impact of expression.

Anne Frank described this frightening period of her life in hiding from 1942 to 1944 while displaying optimism in the face of adversity. Her first entry reads, “I hope I will be able to confide everything to you, as I have never been able to confide in anyone, and I hope you will be a great source of comfort and support” (Frank et al., 2003).

Eva Schloss, who would later become Anne’s sister posthumously, recalled that Anne’s father and her stepfather, Otto, engaged Anne in discussions that intersected private and public life very early on. Schloss noted they spoke about “feminism, racism, and peace—all kinds of ideas which a child that age wouldn’t normally talk about.” Schloss believed the influence of Otto’s early discussions with Anne gave her the depth and clarity of thought to express her ideas so vividly and authentically. Anne’s writings in the Secret Annex were a respite from what she was experiencing. She wrote, “The nicest part is being able to write down all my thoughts and feelings. Otherwise, I’d absolutely suffocate” (Frank et al., 2003). Indeed, Anne found comfort in her ability to express her thoughts on paper. It helped Anne endure the calamity—so much so that even after 2 years of hiding, she still believed in the good of humanity. People who have experienced the power of speech and debate are also familiar with the therapeutic benefits of expression.

Educators consistently recount stories of how students are able to confront what ails them constructively through speech and debate. The story of Jen, who left a destructive course in middle school after finding purpose through speech and debate, is a far too familiar example. In her 14 years, Jen saw and experienced many troubling things that cultivated in her a tough demeanor, which served as armor for confronting negative feelings associated with her challenges. Jen told P-122 in their first debate meeting, “You may have seen me in the news last year. When I was in eighth grade, I started a bunch of fights—everyone knows me for that.”

Underneath that tough façade was a student whose life circumstances had hardened her. Her parents were back in the Caribbean, and she was helping to raise her younger brother with a grandparent who was not fully present. Jen often boasted about her troubles as a way to suppress any negative feelings associated with the tumult. While suppression can be a useful psychological mechanism to block out emotions over which we have no control, its benefits are short-lived because constant suppression is unhealthy (National Research Council, 1994).

With so much out of her control, Jen found that she could use speech and debate to compartmentalize her feelings and positively channel her frustrations. Immigration policies had broken her family apart, yet Jen was now in a space where she could "step back and understand it," according to P-122. Through speech and debate, Jen could actually attend a simulated Congressional session and debate what she herself would do as a Senator. P-122 explained that this provided a new lens for Jen to evaluate both sides, along with the driving policies and cultural ideologies fueling the contentions. Fast forward some years later, and Jen's outcomes were a triumph. Having found a way to express herself through the speech and debate, Jen now plans to pursue a career in criminal justice. Drawing on her own life experiences, she envisions a world where she can have an impact on immigration and drug policies as an attorney. Jen's life trajectory would have been very different without speech and debate. "With her background, she probably would never have gone to college. She's one of my favorites," P-122 said.

The gains that Jen experienced from speech and debate are not surprising to researchers, who study the stress response to cortical regions of the brain. Speech and debate allowed Jen to engage in conversations that forced her to confront emotionally-laden topics that directly impacted her world. Moreover, Jen's ability to express her feelings and evaluate the multiplicity of ideas surrounding issues of concern benefited how she reacted to stress and served as a

protective mechanism in buffering mental health problems. Conversely, research has indicated that while suppressing reactions to stress can lead to a momentary feeling of contentment, it causes long-term damage to the brain. Specifically, the result is an increase in the size of the amygdala and a simultaneous decrease in the prefrontal cortex. The amygdala is essential in learning the emotional significance of cues in the environment (Casey et al., 2019). When it is enlarged, cue perception is exaggerated. Thus, people's expectation of a perceived or future threat is exacerbated, resulting in increased anxiety. A study by Qin et al. (2014) found that an enlarged amygdala in children equated with higher anxiety. Similar findings have been determined in adults (Forster et al., 2012). The prefrontal cortex is the primary region responsible for controlling our emotional responses to stress. In other words, if the prefrontal cortex is not working, nothing is there to prevent an extreme response—which unfortunately happens far too often.

Two Extremes: Explosive Expression and Lack of Expression

Speech and debate educators face varying challenges in teaching students how to express their views. There is a stark distinction between the needs of students in affluent communities versus underserved communities. Despite these differences, the ability of speech and debate to help students make strides in vocalizing their needs, expressing their emotions, and advocating their views remains the same.

When P-115 worked in the Southeast where 95% of the population received reduced or free lunches, classroom management was a struggle. His students were accustomed to expressing their frustrations in ways that were not always advantageous to them or to the class. He taught them to express their emotions instead of exploding. This was a challenge for many of them because they were geared toward other, non-productive forms of expression. It was not unusual

for students to yell at each other and call each other stupid. P-115 taught them how to channel their emotions instead of exploding.

This is not to say voice management is not an issue in affluent suburban areas. While problems may not always be apparent at the surface level, other issues present themselves. P-115 said of the experience of working in a different environment, “Here in Seattle, it’s kind of the opposite. [Speech and debate] helped kids come out of their shells. A lot of kids were really quiet here; they were taught to speak when you are spoken to.” Because of that, getting them to participate was a challenge. They still benefited from speech and debate, but in a different way. “I think the thing that benefits the kids here the most is it helps them come out of their shells,” P-115 revealed.

P-112 services students who reside in a burgeoning tech community and is adamant that speech and debate has helped *all* students come out of their shells. In turn, this can lead to valuable personal revelations. As a society, we want students to have outlets: places to express their frustrations, be taken seriously by others, and to be really seen. “We are the club that accepts everybody. You can find your place in speech and debate if you need to find a place,” proposed P-112. When asked about what gets parents excited, she offered further insights: “Some parents don’t give a crap about [inclusion]. If you have a neurotypical kid who is going to be just fine either way, I don’t think they care about that. But if you have a kid who’s got social anxiety, who’s on the spectrum, who was bullied in middle school, who is shy, who has a stutter or whatever—I think they care really deeply about that.” And with good reason: History shows again and again that youth who are unheard or feel like misfits in one way or another can blow up in ways that have disastrous effects on themselves and those caught in their crosshairs.

Former teacher P-126 shared that when he would speak to schools about adding speech and debate activities to their programming, he always approached it from the perspective of an educator. He used his experience with teaching inner-city youth to advocate for speech and debate's ability to motivate students with loud voices. P-126 remains most proud of a high school program in Oakland, California: "We really invested in the folks who were committed to the debate program. We invested in them as public intellectuals so that when a school policy issue came up, they would go to the principal and say, 'Let's do a debate on this.'" Students stopped fuming and expressing their anger in destructive ways and instead had opportunities and platforms to debate contentious issues.

In all of these cases, students benefited from speech and debate by gaining both aptitude and power to positively and constructively express themselves.

Making Informed Health Decisions

Making health decisions requires that people learn to find and evaluate information. These skills are essential components of speech and debate, during which students learn how to research, interrogate, and articulate arguments. In speech and debate, falling prey to misinformation may result in negative consequences, such as a lost tournament round. However, the stakes are much higher in the real world. Global efforts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic as social media outlets are informing people's health decisions are one prominent example of the importance of evaluating information accurately.

When making health decisions, people often turn to social media as a quick and straightforward channel to cut through ambiguous jargon articulated by health professionals. Consequently, the internet has become a popular resource for people investigating health and health conditions. "However, given the large amount of inaccurate information online, people

can easily become misinformed" (Swire-Thompson & Lazer, 2020, p. 433). For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, social media were described as the cause of a toxic "infodemic" (Schillinger et al., 2020), much of which thwarted efforts for mass vaccination. In the case of COVID-19, personal health decisions impact both the individuals making the decision and society at large due to the public health challenges of vaccine uptake and reaching herd immunity (Basch et al., 2021; OECD, 2021).

Health professionals know that factors influencing how people interpret and act on health information include the framing and clarity of the messages; the timing, duration, and frequency of the communication; influencers associated with the message; and the context and distribution platform (Schillinger et al., 2020). A study conducted by researchers from the William Paterson University and Teachers College, Columbia University showed that greater engagement occurred in TikTok videos created by the general public than from leading health organizations like WHO (Basch et al., 2021). Furthermore, the work of Basch et al. (2021) found that YouTube videos that highlighted negative side effects and inaccurate information on the vaccine were viewed more frequently and had greater engagement than those on the effectiveness and availability of vaccines. Moreover, COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy was found to be prevalent worldwide. While social media users from metropolises in high-income countries (HIC) and lower- and middle-income countries (LMIC) had varying concerns, in both cases negative tweets that focused on vaccine safety, government distrust, and misinformation elicited greater following and more engagement than positive tweets (Hou et al., 2021). While the data showed a preponderance of people engaging with negative information, the high degree of engagement—whether positive or negative—indicated a clear public need for alternative viewpoints. All over the world, people are searching for information to weigh against the advice and suggestions of health professionals

(Hou et al., 2021). Thus, while health professionals looking to impact health decisions positively are challenged to understand and outperform misinformation in clarity, frequency, and engagement on social media, a larger impact might be felt if the general public acquired the tools to analyze information.

While it is clear that the general public is making efforts to become informed, many people appear to be missing the tools to cut through the noise. There is room for change at both ends: from the perspective of public health professionals and regarding how students are educated. Perspective taking is extremely important to the process. In the first case, public health professionals can design inclusive campaigns that speak to the needs and concerns of the greater public when they understand people's varying barriers to change. In the second case, teaching a population of people throughout their educational experiences to understand and articulate entirely new perspectives without getting wrapped up in emotional aspects would also have a significant impact.

Given the wealth of information available coming from various sources on the internet, assessing its quality requires strong critical thinking skills and the ability to determine the validity of online information. Speech and debate helps students examine the entire field, and many participants have supported the ability of speech and debate to increase perspective taking. According to P-110, articulating both sides of an argument helps students separate themselves from their emotions. Because they do not have to take ownership of the argument, they are freed to explore both sides fully. P-111 said, "Debate is great training. Students learn how to check assumptions and evaluate the whole field by arguing different perspectives." Furthermore, speech and debate students are taught the skills to weed out, filter, and discern the credibility of information. For example, when questioning the veracity of an opponent's information,

presenters are usually challenged for the substance supporting their information. Common areas of exploration include whether the information is taken from .edu, .gov, .org, or .com websites; who published the information; whether the authors have hidden agendas; and if peer researchers have supported the reliability and validity of the findings. Furthermore, in instances where there are credible sources for conflicting information, using critical thinking skills to make decisions is important. In a democratic society in which the expression of speech is free and open, containing misinformation will always be a challenge. Additionally, as technology advances and people continue to find quicker, leaner, and easier ways to disseminate information to the larger public, education policymakers and practitioners will need to drive pedagogical approaches that give students the tools to discern the quality of information, articulate ideas without being fraught by emotion, and advocate safer health practices for themselves and others.

Educating the Whole Child

In the Haitian community, a frequent distinction is made between an educated versus an instructed mind. In a society where classism trumps all other forms of prejudice, people are categorized and placed on rungs based on education, but not in the traditional sense that it means in the United States. Status is not merely based on academic accomplishments, although that too is included. However, it is a holistic and more easily discernable set of qualities. When Haitians refer to an instructed person, they refer strictly to their academic abilities. Yet, the educated person integrates the academic domain with psychological fortitude and competence in cultural, societal, and social interactions. This is not exclusive to Haitian society. People from classist systems worldwide can identify where a person belongs on the ladder within minutes of an interaction.

So how does an educated mind develop? For some people, the concept of an "educated" mind and an "intellectual" mind is one and the same. For others, the concept consists of two different things. A related question examines intellectual giftedness and what cultivates it. Is it innate talent, environment, or some other unknown? Intelligence is a loaded term that can mean so much with varying definitions depending on who one asks. If asking a group of people the question, "How would you identify intelligent behavior?" their answers will vary. Some will name a famous entrepreneur, popular entertainer, or Nobel Prize winner. The common thread is the focus on "the greats." However, other respondents will pick people they know in their own lives, based on their penchants for the arts, strong communication skills, or academic prowess. This is also heavily subjective because it depends on factors like the professions and aptitudes respondents personally recognize as superior. The collection of skills includes qualities that reflect people's ability to thrive in turbulent, ever-changing environments. These include confidence, reasoning, argumentation, resilience, social skills, and more. In the Haitian community, this is what constitutes an "educated" person. It transcends instruction to encompass people's values, how they treat others, how they interact in the world, more of the same.

Domestic and international education communities increasingly recognize that a "whole child" perspective to education focused on cognitive and noncognitive skills is essential to a broader conceptualization of what it means to be an educated person. Notably, UNESCO's Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 (2016), an international body that establishes educational visions for the next 15 years, stated:

> Relevant learning outcomes must be well defined in cognitive and non-cognitive domains, and continually assessed as an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Quality education includes the development of those skills, values, attitudes and knowledge that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions and respond to local and global challenges. (García & Weiss, 2016)

How can these skills be cultivated? This is the question parents attempt to answer through their unique reinforcement and punishment schedules. John B. Watson, an American psychologist who played an essential role in developing behaviorism, is often recalled for his bold quote on the power of nurture. Watson said:

> Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in, and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select—doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief, and yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations and race of his ancestors.

Behaviorists believe they can shape, mold, and modify behavior through associative learning, which implies that the gift of raising an educated person can be harvested and cultivated in the real world. But the question that remains is: How? While educators worldwide are trying to solve this question, speech and debate educators already know the answer.

This analysis introduced real-world stories told by some of the giants in the speech and debate field who asserted that speech and debate training has the potential to educate the whole child by tapping into students' mindsets, encouraging guided instruction, facilitating resilience, and more.

Psychological Benefits

P-110 met Ken's mom when she walked into her office and said, "My son Ken is deep on the spectrum, he doesn't have friends, the kids in school don't like him, and he doesn't know how to relate to them. Despite all of this, he really wants to debate." After his mom's declaration, her son went on to attend classes and work on his debate skills for a year. While he decided to sit out the annual tournament despite having the opportunity to attend, Ken was aware of the transformation he was undergoing. P-110 explained, "I think students see the difference in themselves. They notice it. They feel it." Tournament or not, debate was paying off in ways that

mattered. Ken's daily conversations and interactions with his larger community were opportunities to practice, refine, and hone his skills. He was just exercising them in the tournament of life. His goals, for the most part, were not trophies and awards. Rather, it was to be seen in his community and to be accepted and celebrated as a person who belonged.

In his second year of debate, Ken attended a national autism awareness event in which he stood up and spoke in front of everyone. According to Ken's mother, that accomplishment alone was a success. She videotaped the moment from her phone and sent it to P-110 to view. Ken told the audience, "Debate has changed my life. Look at what I'm doing right now. I could never talk in front of anyone, and no one liked me because I didn't know how to tell them what I was thinking or feeling."

Ken not only delivered a clear message, but he received one as well. While it did not happen instantaneously, his speech and debate experience were paying off in the form of psychological benefits, including increased resilience. While the psychological benefits of speech and debate are rarely discussed, participation in speech and debate has the potential to promote resilience by changing a student's self-defeating mindset and/or bolstering an already existing positive mindset. In this case, the student may have suspected that social skills were malleable, but speech and debate encouraged and facilitated resilience in him by confirming that there is potential to change.

According to Yeager and Dweck (2012), for a person to exercise the potential to change, "they need mindsets that represent challenges as things that they can take on and overcome over time with effort, new strategies, learning, help from others, and patience." Through his training sessions and real-world practice within his environment, Ken gained the conviction that his efforts could produce positive results—so much so that he sought out even greater challenges.

P-110 reported, “By the end of the second year, [Ken] was chomping at the bit to participate in the annual tournament.” Not only did he successfully compete, but he triumphed. “That year out of hundreds of students at our annual tournament, he won best individual speaker. I mean, it’s just almost unbelievable,” said P-110. P-110 referred to Ken’s story as “a superstar example of impact.” She continued, “This is someone who you couldn’t have imagined how difficult it was for him to participate and just grow that much.” Indeed, his success is a tremendous feat by any measure, as well as an inspiring one. P-110 continued, “It’s just a built-in thing; every child takes away that sense of empowerment and confidence from learning the skills that come with debate to some degree.”

Researchers from the University of Texas and Stanford University identified resilience as “any behavioral, attributional, or emotional response to an academic or social challenge that is positive and beneficial for development (such as seeking new strategies, putting forth greater effort, or solving conflicts peacefully)” and not resilient as “any response to a challenge that is negative or not beneficial for development (such as helplessness, giving up, cheating, or aggressive retaliation)” (Yeager & Dweck, 2012, p. 304). P-104 also spoke to how students exercise a mindset that brings forth resilience when they participate in speech and debate. She viewed resilience as the primary gain of speech and debate. While it may seem counterintuitive, P-104 also valued speech and debate for students who may not have experienced a lot of failure in their lives as well as for students who are accustomed to being the smartest. “I love this because once they get into a debate round and they recognize that they’re not always the smartest kid in the room, there’s a big process to learn how to lose and not letting that be the end point of an activity or something that you’re trying to achieve.” Speech and debate also reframes failure as a life lesson and learning opportunity. P-104 continued:

> In a debate round loss, you get feedback from a judge and maybe an educator or an instructor. So instead of a loss, being a failure and somewhere to stop you have this feedback that you go and then you tinker on what areas that you need to work on, and then it ends up being better the next time.

Finally, P-104 pointed out that speech and debate offers many opportunities for trial and error:

> In a debate tournament, you do multiple debates of the same topic often. And even if it's a different topic, you get the opportunity to try again. So [speech and debate] allows students the practice of taking feedback that people give them in life and applying it to the work and outcomes that they want—so it's good for goal setting.

P-111 offered yet another common experience of students in speech and debate. His middle school debate team was having an exceptional season with the majority of students being motivated and hungry to win. In describing their success, P-111's excitement was palpable; his voice increased in intensity with each proclamation of victory. "The first tournament we killed it, second tournament we killed it; third tournament we killed it!" Team members earned multiple top finishes and ended up taking first place in multiple divisions. Despite the "high" of winning, there are always those students who are not enjoying the same feelings of joy, insisted P-111. He shared the example of Christine, who experienced crushing defeat despite being exceptionally good. "I don't understand how in one tournament she goes 0-3," P-111 lamented. In his eyes, Christine was one of the best novices on the team, yet she still lost every single round. P-111 continued to encourage her. "This is just one of those anomalies. They're going to recognize what you can do; it's going to be excellent," he told her. Still, she once again left the next tournament with a losing record. This time, Christine was not only dealing with the stress of disappointing herself, but she had also been paired with one of the highest-performing students in the novice division. This was an ongoing concern of P-111. During big wins, he worried about "how students view their peers who did not have the same level of success." In this case, the social pressure of letting down a teammate may have compounded Christine's disappointment. It

would have been easy for her to give up, and no one would have blamed her. But it is exactly at this moment that a pivotal, crucial point presents itself—a crossroads of sorts. It is the opportunity for students to develop resilience.

Who in their right mind would continue to aim for a goal despite constant defeat? On the face of it, the response seems obvious: no one sensible. In fact, passivity in the face of defeat may be attributable to an adaptive response (Maier & Seligman, 2016). In 1975, two University of Pennsylvania graduate students, Martin Seligman and Steven F. Maier, accidentally discovered in dogs a passivity to react to failed situations; at the time, they postulated that the dogs' helplessness was a learned response. However, in his more recent book *The Hope Circuit,* Seligman proposed that engaging in passivity to escape aversive events is not learned. He argued that humans naturally default to helplessness when faced with events outside their control. According to Seligman and Maier (2016), this default mechanism is "mediated by the serotonergic activity of the dorsal raphe nucleus" (p. 349). While this brain region ultimately inhibits escape, neurological mechanisms are in place that encourage hopefulness under the right conditions. Specifically, Seligman noted the passivity to be helpless "can be overcome by learning control with the activity of the medial prefrontal cortex." (p. 349). He dubbed this the "hope circuit."

While more recent research has leaned toward the learned hopefulness hypothesis, the inability of dogs to react after repeated negative conditions remains the same. Seligman and Maier's findings indicated that when dogs were subjected to receiving an electric shock after hearing a tone with no way to escape, they defaulted to inaction. Later, when placed under conditions where they could easily avoid the shock, the dogs did not attempt to escape. Because they did not learn they could exercise control over their conditions, they failed to learn

hopefulness. This is comparable to the plight of neglected children who do not receive aid; they will exhibit symptoms of helplessness (Leonard, 2019). However, through participation in speech and debate, students learn that they do have control; they learn to be "active, reflective agents," said P-120.

"The sense of agency refers to this feeling of being in the driving seat when it comes to our actions" (Moore, 2016, p. 1272). Despite the many failed attempts students experience in speech and debate, they push through. According to P-120, there is creative tension in debate as students engage in thoughtfulness and reflection over diverse issues that they learn to articulate. The tension is between allowing conditions to remain the same, despite how averse, and initiating conversations about ways to shift conditions in directions that are favorable to the needs and desires of themselves and others. As P-120 said:

> Debate gets kids ready, so that they don't just acclimate, they become active, reflective agents. Because they practice the skills that are necessary to speak out inside of debate, they get used to challenging assertions. They get used to calling out authority and asking the authority to account for itself. They get used to articulating interests and eventually their own interests.

Speech and debate students do this not because they are inherently different from other students. Rather, their behaviors result from the psychological gains they make in agency, mindset, resilience, and grit from speech and debate. When students learn they have control, the psychological gains increase. This finding is supported by Duckworth and Yeager (2015). In a nationally representative sample of secondary students, Yeager et al. (2019) provided students with factual information and guided exercises that contradicted the belief that math scores were due to an innate fixed ability. They were told that neurons in the brain form stronger and newer connections from learning over time. Once they learned that math competencies were not fixed, the students' math scores increased. The findings showed that grit which "entails working

strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress" is more predictive of success than IQ and conscientiousness (Duckworth et al., 2007, pp. 1087-1088).

However, making strides toward developing that growth mindset, resilience, and grit requires some assistance—whether through the wherewithal of a family that scrimps to afford one tutor; the love and wisdom of caregivers who insist and help students overcome obstacles; or the encouragement of people who praise their efforts and not the outcomes. For speech and debate students, that assistance is a customary part of instruction. P-113 insisted, "If I had to just pick one thing about this activity that makes everybody better, it's learning to receive feedback and then doing something constructive with it." This concept is exemplified in Lev Vygotsky's concept of "Zone of Proximal Development," better known as ZPD. A well-known Russian psychologist best known for his sociocultural theory, Vygotsky believed that children's interactions with their social environments play a critical role in learning, and that their latent talents and abilities need to be unearthed. He asserted that students need scaffolded, guided instruction to make new leaps in thought. Imagine having two 8-year-old children with the same grades and seemingly the same intellectual abilities. One might surmise that if they were both given the same complex problems to solve, they would arrive at the same response and stop at the same point of difficulty—and one would surmise correctly. Now, imagine being provided a clue to one child about how he or she could progress unbeknownst to the other child before challenging them both to try the problem again. That is the beauty of speech and debate; it provides students the opportunity for trial and error with feedback in between. This is the differentiating factor that leads one student to become a champion and the other to feel like sinking in quicksand.

Thanks to speech and debate, Christine was in the former group. After experiencing so many moments of defeat, she had reached an important turning point. P-111's guidance was also pivotal to helping her develop the mental fortitude that would carry her though. Specifically, P-111 was passionate about goal setting. "I have students set goals each month. They are asked to set personal and skill goals. Whether they are going to work on refuting, tone of voice, clarity, or transitional statements. I also have them pick a character trait. Whether they're going to work on communication, accountability, or responsibility," he explained.

P-123 also included goal setting as a core element of his curriculum. Having grown up with a speech impediment, he had a personal connection to overcoming challenges. This has been his impetus for helping students endeavor to do the same. He explained:

> I need to make sure that when I'm implementing my curriculum, it's meeting the scholars halfway. It first starts by understanding the goals of the scholars outside of just intellectual and competitive success. We have to constantly think about what are the social and emotional goals that our students want to achieve when they take on an endeavor like speech and debate.

In sum, the driving hypothesis is that speech and debate has the potential to produce psychological gains, such as agency, growth mindset, resilience, and grit, which positively impact the health and well-being of children and adolescents. This may present as an audacious assertion. However, given the training and repeated actions that are foundational expectations of speech and debate programs, combined with the return on investment that speech and debate has the potential to produce in the lives of these students and society, shifting the pedagogy in elementary and middle schools to incorporate speech and debate training is a natural conclusion.

Improved Student-Teacher Relationships

Speech and debate also has the potential to improve the quality of teacher-student relationships, with implications for student interests and engagement in school, teacher morale,

and the encouragement students receive on their academic journeys. This study is the first to identify the reciprocal effects that speech and debate has on student and teacher relationships in the school community.

Most students return from the first day of school with homework for their parents. The prompt is usually something like, “Please tell me your child’s strengths and weaknesses.” This same question is also a dreaded interview question for job applicants. Everyone can agree that this is not the time to unearth any skeletons from the closet. Rather, it is an opportunity to highlight strengths while providing a token weakness that is inconsequential in its context. Why? Because of the impact of self-fulfilling prophecies, better known in psychological jargon as “the Rosenthal” or “Pygmalion” effect. This psychological phenomenon, which emerged in the 1960s, suggests that people’s expectations for people and entities lead them to engage in behaviors or actions that eventually confirm those beliefs.

In the seminal 1968 study by Rosenthal and Jacobson, California elementary school students were given IQ tests, after which Rosenthal informed teachers that five randomly chosen students showed great intellectual promise (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Toward the end of the year, the same students were administered another IQ test. First and second graders who had been deemed intellectual bloomers showed significant gains in IQ scores, compared to their counterparts. According to researchers, this occurred because teachers treated these five students differently by providing better and more feedback and asking them more questions. This, in turn, led to better academic performance. Despite the information’s inaccuracies, the Pygmalion effect resulted in teachers acting in ways—consciously or unconsciously—that confirmed what they believed to be true.

It is not surprising that parents accentuate any and all remotely connected positive attributes to their children in an effort to tap into the positive outcomes of self-fulfilling prophecies. In positive cases, the Pygmalion effect may positively impact students' self-efficacy, which is the belief that they are competent and capable. A similar interplay may occur for speech and debate students whose teachers have identified positive attributes. Speech and debate positions students positively with teachers from the onset. This not only increases their chances of being engaged students, but also impacts how teachers and others in the school community perceive them. The teachers think they are great students, which supports them doing great things. In turn, these same students respond positively to the teachers. In this relationship, the gains received by both teachers and students continue to mount. University of Virginia researchers indicated that "improving students' relationships with teachers has important, positive and long-lasting implications for both students' academic and social development" (Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2010). Opportunities for frequent constructive guidance and praise, as opposed to apathy and criticism, result in more engagement and increased competencies in students.

Additionally, evidence has suggested that students who are eager and prepared to capitalize on learning are positively rated by their teachers. W. Sean Kearney and Theresa Garfield (2019) "examined the relationship between teacher perceptions of student readiness for academic task analysis and middle grades mathematics achievement" (p. 7). When comparing middle school students' math tests and standardized scores, they found that students whose teachers rated them as being prepared for academic tasks performed better. Kearney and Garfield concluded, "One possible interpretation is that teachers accurately perceive student readiness to learn, and this readiness to learn directly correlates with actual learning." Another explanation

provided by the researchers is that teachers feel positive about students who are engaged and interested in learning, making it easier for them to disseminate information effectively. Regardless of what explanation is accurate, the classrooms also provide social context. Students who come to school disengaged from learning and with low readiness are especially susceptible to differences in the quality of social relationships that are developed in the classroom and within their school community (Hughes & Chen, 2011). Teachers have internal needs for positive interpersonal relationships with their students. Students who are disengaged receive teacher responses that further undermine their motivation and the motivation of the teachers (Tan, 2018). There is a reciprocal relationship at play. Taken together, the peer and teacher relationships that speech and debate students enjoy increase the chances that they will continue to flourish academically and socially.

Thus, as altruistic as teachers and educators may be, the benefits of speech and debate do not stop with students. Rather, it is a bidirectional relationship. While teacher morale is a seldom discussed topic, it has a huge impact on classroom and school learning environments (Tan, 2018). Teachers with higher morale produce more engaged students, while unhappy teachers can undermine a fruitful learning environment. Similarly, teachers and coaches also benefit from having vibrant and engaged students who care about learning. Student engagement is encouraging and makes it easier for teachers to deliver and facilitate learning. P-119 said, “I tell people that I’ve got the easiest teaching job in the world because the one thing I don’t have to do is motivate students and that’s the hardest part of teaching. Delivering content is easy; motivating students is hard, so if you could find a pedagogy that motivates students, you’re ninety percent of the way to success.” DJ-119’s experience was echoed by the account of P-117, who shared the story of a time when a social studies teacher came to him to complain about

speech and debate. When P-117 questioned whether the students were slacking off in the class, the social studies teacher said the opposite was happening: The speech and debate students were exemplary at getting their work done and participating in class. The problem was not their presence but their absence. “I require a certain percentage of classroom discussion. When you take the debaters out for tournaments, you’ve just taken the core of my discussion out of my classroom,” the social studies teacher told P-117.

In sum, speech and debate fosters student engagement which enhances student-teacher relationships. Teachers who do not teach speech and debate but still see the value—whether because they know their students are involved in the activity or because their students are active and engaged in the classroom—implicitly support those students by showing them more interest.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogical Approach (RQ2)

Over 90% of the participants spoke about the importance of a sound pedagogical approach when teaching speech and debate. A handful also emphasized cultural competence as an essential element of teaching. Within this group, every participant serviced urban students of color in a school or district where the majority of students received free and reduced lunch. It would be remiss not to include cultural competence in the discussion.

The practice of teaching in ways that are culturally responsive is referred to as “culturally relevant pedagogy,” a term introduced by Ladson-Billings (1995) as an effective theoretical model “that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (p. 469). Those conversations naturally find air-time in speech and debate spaces. P-103 talked about the importance of having students debate with dignity and respect for everyone:

> We definitely focus on anti-racism, we focus on culturally relevant pedagogy, we also focus on justice, racial justice, economic justice, social justice. I think that an important part of the program is that students are able to debate with dignity and respect for everyone, their opponents as well as the people who they're talking about in relation to the issues.

"You're acting White!" Black people use this slur to denigrate their counterparts who break away from the culture by engaging in ways that appeal to the larger majority, a/k/a "White" culture. Many researchers have talked about the concept of "acting White" within the context of academic excellence. In her book *Integration Interrupted: Tracking, Black Students, and Acting White after* Brown, Karolyn Tyson explained that students feel the burden of "acting White" when they are underrepresented in high-achieving spaces (Tyson, 2011). Thus, "acting White" is less about academic excellence and more about a disconnect from culture and community. For many, these signals of disconnect lead to emotional distress and anxiety. Durkee and Williams (2013) found that the frequency with which Black students were accused by their peers of "acting White" predicted severe mental health symptoms. Whether at an unconscious or a conscious level, many Black students dread the consequences of what it means to be shunned as being "other." This is something that P-126 keenly understands, despite being a White speech and debate professional. His race has not prevented him from understanding all students' needs to belong and be seen as competent members of their community. This is consistent among speech and debate educators. Regardless of the race of the participants, those who work with urban, poor, and minority speech and debate students understand them in ways that others do not. P-105, a White male, said that even after 10 years at his school, he was still an outsider because he comes from the Midwest and does not speak Spanish. However, his cultural responsiveness has allowed him to make inroads. He explained:

> I think that debate is one of the best things to make culturally responsive, and I realized that I wasn't using that term, but that was what the principal was coaching me to

> do the whole time. That's her guidance. She wasn't calling it that but that's what it was and I still have room to grow, but it's at least something I'm constantly thinking about and something I'm pretty good at.

This cultural approach to debate has been used to promote academic benefits in students. For instance, Rimm-Kaufman et al.'s (2014) study explored the benefits of a responsive teaching approach on students' academic progress over the course of 3 years. This student-centered special emotional approach facilitates positive relationships between teachers and their students. It is "designed to improve a teacher's ability to understand and meet students' individual needs," and encompasses their cultural and development needs (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014).

Research has indicated that when teachers receive training to improve their relations with their students by creating a classroom environment that fosters positive affective relationships, student achievement in math and reading increases. Over a 3-year longitudinal study, 24 schools (13 intervention and 11 controls) were examined to see the effects of a responsive classroom (RC) approach. Third through fifth grade teachers at 13 intervention schools received week-long training in RC for two consecutive summers. Each summer training session was preceded by three RC workshops and supplemented by 3 days of school-based training during the school year. Training was also offered to school administrators, and the entire community had access to RC books in the school library. The control group continued normal operations. After controlling for SES, students from schools where RC was carried out had better academic performance in reading and math (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014). However, these outcomes were only supported when the prescriptive approach was followed with high levels of fidelity. Consider environments where these relationships are not formed artificially in a vacuum but instead emerge as a natural consequence of speech and debate participation. In speech and debate, educators connect with students and take a deep interest in understanding who they are. They use that connection to plan and strategize their approach in a way that is culturally sensitive to their students' needs. For all

of P-126's ambitious goals to inculcate a school community with speech and debate, he knew the program had to gain the buy-in of the student body in ways that did not detract from their identities.

A culturally responsive pedagogy has been found to be effective in science curricula. In a meta-synthesis of 52 research studies, of which 46 were qualitative, two quantitative, and four mixed, Brown (2017) investigated the relationship between inquiry-based and culturally responsive science practices in K-12 settings. The findings determined the two approaches to be complementary. As teachers "engaged in science experiences that were empowering, validating, and relevant to their lives, students of color, English language learners, and low-income students practiced many aspects of inquiry that were reflective of Western science" (p. 1166). Examining information in ways that build on students' cultural data sets advances equitable science education that produces gains in student abilities to engage in inquiry-based learning practices. In Brown's study, meshing of inquiry with cultural responsiveness allowed students to interrogate "science content in sociopolitical consciousness-raising experiences, such as identifying pollution and asthma incidences in an urban area according to neighborhood location." This was facilitated by having students assimilate, analyze, interpret, and communicate the information using the evidence-based claim argumentation style (p. 1143), all of which is foundational to speech and debate.

P-126 fondly reminisced about his time working with students in California, recalling that students became intellectuals on campus. When something impacted their community, the students were the first ones to step forward. P-126 not only spoke of these students with affection, but he also had a great deal of esteem and respect for them and for their ability to balance the demands of two worlds. In telling stories about these students, P-126 switched

between using an academic tone and one infused with his students' vernacular to convey their style and pattern of communication. P-126 shared the story of one student who approached the principal with a topic that negatively impacted students at the school. "He said, 'Yo principal, we need to do a debate on this,'" related P-126. This colloquial language might have been viewed with ridicule or disdain in some situations, but not in the case of these scholars who were public intellectuals on campus and known for their academic prowess, work ethic, and strong argumentation skills. Their positioning as intellectuals provided opportunities for them to respond to issues that might otherwise have led to frustration. Moreover, because students excelled without losing their cultural identities and gained popularity, it also impacted the perception of speech and debate on campus, which was viewed as "cool." In meshing their cultural identities with speech and debate, these students balanced academic expectation while demonstrating cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995). P-126's speech and debate students were a product of culturally relevant pedagogy. This pedagogical approach provides opportunities to teach to students of color in a way that is committed to social justice and equity, so students feel respected and heard (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

In observing the teaching practices of eight exemplary African American and White teachers over the course of 3 years in the early 1990s, Ladson-Billings (1995) found that these teachers were engaging in culturally relevant pedagogy and urban students of color in those classes were flourishing academically and cognitively. According to Ladson-Billings, the impetus behind her work was to "challenge deficit paradigms that prevailed in the literature on African Americans" (p. 472). Similarly, many participants who employed culturally responsive practices also identified the need to capitalize on students' strength and use their knowledge to dispel notions of deficits thinking. P-114 explained that these students were subject to the

narrative that they had deficits and their only trajectories for success could be found in sports. His aim was to debunk that narrative and to show students that they were just as capable as students; he endeavored to teach them this in ways that would most resonate with and matter to them.

P-105 recalled the story of watching his students on the basketball court during an afterschool enrichment activity and wondering how he could possibly compete with that. After all, the students were relishing in the activity in which they were expected to do well. "I remember thinking, 'What am I going to have to do to make my afterschool debate space a place that's as valid to be as that space out there?'" P-105 decided to cater his style to his students' needs and strengths. "I'm not that cool, so they're not going to come for me; they're going to come for each other. I'm going to need to empower leadership among the students." According to P-105, while teaching the techniques of debate was easy, teaching in a way that was culturally relevant and appropriate was a challenge. He guided training and competitions, but his primary focus was encouraging students to bring in their lived experiences.

By incorporating students' lived experiences, speech and debate has the potential to connect cultural experiences with students' abilities to tap into academic success. The findings of this study demonstrated that fostering a culturally relevant pedagogical approach supports students in maintaining their cultural integrity while still excelling as speech and debate competitors. They critically responded, analyzed, and interrogated data through the lens of their own cultural experiences and identities. In sum, a culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy promotes student success by engaging them in larger social structural issues in a meaningful way that recognizes their strengths while speaking critically about issues.

Time Constraints: Debate Across the Curriculum (RQ3)

The consensus among participants is that speech and debate instruction can be facilitated by nearly any educator and with limited training—as long as educators have the motivation to tailor their approach to the cultural needs of their community and have the time to make it happen. Due to its teaching and administrative commitments, speech and debate requires many hours across multiple days to implement effectively. Many participants discussed how this activity took away from their family time. P-113 reported that speech and debate took a significant toll on her personal life: "[It] became an impediment to developing my own career, which I had to do for my family's sake. I got to the point where too much was taken away; I was spending seventy-five percent of my time as a fundraiser. I don't mind doing some of that, but I have to do other things." P-122 explained that since her daughter was born, she was no longer able to stay after school as often as she would like to expand her current speech and debate offerings. P-111 asserted that he volunteered hundreds of hours to his speech and debate—particularly during the pandemic—to ensure its sustenance. He says, "Last year I volunteered the entire year because the budget for extracurriculars was cut. So that was a few hundred hours for the year that I just did because I enjoy debate, the kids love it too, and then I wanted to keep momentum going." This was a constant refrain among speech and debate professionals who are dismayed by the workload but cannot bear to let it lapse. Across all of these conversations, it was clear that speech and debate educators loved, valued, and believed in the power of the activity to benefit students and school communities alike, while simultaneously lamenting their limited capacity to support it.

However, there *are* options that can reduce the stress load and ensure that speech and debate can be offered to all students. The literature has referred to this as Debate Across the

Curriculum (DAC) or Debate Centered Instruction (DCI). Melissa Wade, a pioneer who headed Atlanta's first Urban Debate League, said, "DAC has the possibility of creating genuine change in urban, suburban, and rural schools by engaging students and teachers in a rich conversation of mutual learning" (Snider & Schnurer, 2006). Added Professor Bellon (2000), "Debate-intensives instruction has the potential to improve human relationships in the larger community and in the classroom" (p. 175). While some educators have discussed exploring how debate can be used to support assertions and substantive argumentation made in classes across the curriculum, much of those conversations have been focused on students who are in the high school and at the collegiate levels. However, in the book *Resolved: Debate Can Revolutionize Education and Help Save Our Democracy* (2020), Brookings Institution Non-Resident Senior Fellow Robert Litan stressed the importance of embedding speech and debate instruction as early as elementary school, highlighting this type of instruction as a potential equalizer for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Many educators have become involved in speech and debate work. The humanities teachers at P-115's school have begun incorporating debate structure into their daily lessons. Meanwhile, P-112 expressed enthusiasm for a newly launched school for young men where "the entire pedagogy is based in speech and debate so whether it's science or math or anything else, yes, super exciting."

Seeing Is Believing (RQ4)

The primary stakeholders who support speech and debate are the coaches, teachers, school administrators, parents, and, of course, the students who participate. All stakeholders perceive value in speech and debate. Coaches and teachers speak of the feelings of enjoyment they get from the job and the benefits students get from participation. School administrators

support speech and debate because of its alignment with school standards as well as with the administrators' own vision of success. For parents, the short- and long-term gains are clear. P-124's thoughts were that "the driver for ninety percent of the parents is just probably helping their kid do better in school, maybe get into a better high school, get into a better college. They just see it as a worthy activity." Everyone agreed that speech and debate offers great value. What, exactly, are stakeholders seeing and experiencing? They are witnessing transformation in the lives of their students across a multitude of measures, including the ability to convey clear thinking, interface with people of all ages, take charge when necessary, and deal positively with many socioemotional and mental health problems that surface.

As a teacher who doubled up as a debate coach, P-106 explained what he saw as a major impact of speech and debate on students. He asserted, "I think the debaters stand out because they understand what it takes to make an entire group function, whether it's a two-person, eight-person, or ten-person group. My debaters tend to be the ones who are always asked to be the leaders in the group." P-103 added that English Language Arts (ELA) teachers have independently identified the prowess of debaters. He said, "An ELA teacher came to me and said, 'Oh my gosh, the debate students in my class are speaking up and their essays are great!'" This teacher immediately recognized and was gratified by the output of speech and debate, so imagine the payoff for the students themselves when they reach a level where the work they have put in is visible.

Regardless of a student's starting point, milestones reached during the speech and debate journey are mostly felt and seen by students and parents who commit to the process. However, it is rare for teachers who do not teach speech and debate to see long-term payoffs because the gains students make are not immediately evident in the classroom. According to P-106, "Unless

you're a legacy school that has been doing debate for a while and has a real rhythm and has built to scale, it will take time before the benefits are realized." This is due in some part to the fact that classroom teachers do not usually stay with the same group of students, so they do not get to follow them through their speech and debate trajectory to compare individual growth between those who have access to speech and debate and those who do not. P-113 believed that school administrators and people of power do not stay long enough to see the transformation of students involved in the activity. She saw many changes in leadership during her 20-plus years as a speech and debate coach, including upwards of five different principals. Furthermore, she reported that while school boards once comprised members with kids in the school, this shifted in the early 1990s with more people who were running for political reasons or business professionals looking to boost their clientele.

Getting to see the growth facilitated by speech and debate is a memorable experience for educators who witness it. Take Caitlin, who started debate in 6th grade and continued throughout high school. In using Caitlin's story as a demonstration of the compounded competitive advantage that speech and debate brings after years of participation, P-120 praised Caitlin's argumentation, reasoning, and analytical skills. He also emphasized her excellent leadership and social skills. By her junior year, Caitlin was the president of her debate team. P-120 recalled that she had a unique comfort level talking with the teachers, seniors, and college kids judging the competitions.

> She had the confidence and the ability to do all those things and navigate through the spaces of high school in ways that other freshmen are not. The kids who have done debate are so used to speaking and relating to kids that they've never met before at tournaments and spending time thinking about arguments that high school is no biggie because they're just so used to that.

Thus, speech and debate students are empowered to be active, engaged, and vocal members of the school community.

Stakeholders Need a Front-Row Seat

Given all the information pointing to the profound value of speech and debate, how do we get stakeholders to fully buy into it? To generate stakeholder buy-in, they need to have a front-row seat to witness for themselves the student gains facilitated by speech and debate participation. However, for educators to truly understand the benefits, they need to see their own students in action over an extended period of time. This allows them to evaluate their own student outcomes independently. Conversely, the field of vision is limited when educators evaluate students they have not worked with directly. P-117, as with any speech and debate educator, has a front-row seat to his students' growth and accomplishments. When asked about his perceptions of middle schoolers involved in speech and debate, his observations differed from the glowing remarks he had for his own students. For instance, P-117 talked about noticing a lack of development in the middle school students he observed at tournaments, which he attributed to the fact that coaches were doing too much of the work for the students. As he explained it, the association he was part of had middle school-level programs that ran alongside his high school activity. He explained he frequently made the argument that they were doing an injustice to the students because the coaches were doing too much of the work. P-117 said, "I saw far too many coaches at that level just handing material. And saying here's what you say in this speech, here's what you're saying in that speech, and to me, that deleted the debate experience because like an iceberg, giving the speeches in the round is just the top ten percent."

Overall, speech and debate supporters do so partly because of its visible benefits. All of these educators were able to see firsthand the power of speech and debate. Based on the

accounts, the skills that emerge for students who engage in speech and debate are extensive. However, stakeholders have distinct experiences with students that limit the amount of growth they see. For educators to see the change that individual students and groups experience, they need to have a front-row seat to students' journey throughout their speech and debate experience.

Limitations

I run a speech and debate organization that services elementary to rising high school students. It has allowed me to see firsthand the benefits students receive from participating in speech and debate. Thus, I am a staunch advocate, and that orientation may have led to unbalanced inquiries and interpretations. It may have influenced the questions I asked participants, the probes I followed up on, and how I interpreted the findings.

Additionally, the interview process has some inherent problems, including the inclination of respondents to answer questions to appear favorable and the experience of interview fatigue for the respondents. While these issues cannot be eliminated, they can be mitigated to a degree. To minimize the effects of respondents providing favorable responses, the study used a sample of 25 respondents from different parts of the speech and debate ecosystem to saturate and triangulate the data. Additionally, to mitigate the effects of interview fatigue, the interviews were limited to between 45 and 60 minutes unless respondents indicated that they wanted to speak longer; two interviews conducted were approximately 80 minutes.

The diversity of the sample is another limitation. The sample size was based on a snowball sampling method initiated from my network. The pandemic resulted in increased comfort with conferencing via the web. The culture of Zoom meetings that emerged at this time facilitated ease of communication with participants spanning from the northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest regions of the United States who were working with students in urban

and suburban populations. Despite the expansive reach facilitated by web conferencing, a different network might have gathered unique experiences that were not captured in this sample. For instance, no participants could speak about the speech and debate experiences of rural students.

Given the shortage of elementary and middle school educators who are actively involved in speech and debate efforts, finding those who would be viewed by the speech and debate community as "experts" was another limitation of the study. Many of the participants did not strictly service elementary or middle school students. Thus, the sample population was restricted to a portion of elementary and middle school educators who also serviced high school students as well as a segment of participants who only worked with high school students. To mitigate the limitations of high school speech and debate professionals who did not service elementary or middle school students, participants were asked to reflect on the differences they observed between first-year students exposed to speech and debate in their younger years versus those who were not. In other cases, high school professionals were asked to discuss experiences they might have had with elementary or middle school students during tournaments, summer programming, and other interactions.

The study's final limitation relates to the sources that were triangulated. Source triangulation was used to examine differences between the experiences of professionals from three parts of the speech and debate ecosystem:

1. professionals from schools,
2. professionals from independent organizations or community-based organizations (CBOs), and
3. professionals from regional, state, and national associations or leagues.

Other than these professionals, the students receiving the services and the parents who are integral in supporting their children's endeavors are the important stakeholders in the space. While the professionals provided anecdotes detailing their interactions with students and parents, the primary accounts of these two stakeholders were absent from the findings.

Implications

Knowledge regarding school health initiatives as they relate to the "whole child" school reform has grown at a rapid pace, and opportunities for key players in the educational landscape to share more effective educational practices have also increased. Taking advantage of those advances in ways that inform successful school approaches, however, requires integrating insights from practitioners who provide supplemental support to primary students in and outside of school hours that address health promotion by improving their mental, psychological, cognitive, and social-emotional well-being. The findings of this research study placed speech and debate educators at the center of those efforts.

A contributor to the problem in reform efforts has resulted from inadequate weigh-in of ground-level practitioners. In 1985, Joe Check, the author of *Politics, Language, and Culture: A Critical Look at Urban School Reform*, stated, "In our ongoing national dialogue on school reform, there are few voices from 'the bottom' that matter. We are missing the unmediated voice of practitioners who are actually attempting reform, achieving it, failing at it, or partially achieving it and wondering why they haven't done better" (Peterson, 2002, para 2). Nearly 4 decades later, not much has changed in the contribution of practitioners to school reform. Murphy (2020) from Vanderbilt University said that educators have no significant voice in reforms; teachers are treated like hired hands whose primary focus is listening to descriptions for new reform initiatives espoused by outsiders. Despite the inadequate weigh-in of educators'

voices, the OECD (2018) recognized that education policymakers can gain much from listening to the advice of experienced teachers who can identify good teaching practices.

Policy and practice decisions need to incorporate the approaches presented by teachers and educators who are on the ground and not consumed with driving academic objectives and checking off standards boxes. Instead, policymakers would benefit from hearing from educators who have been in spaces where the entire focus is to listen and engage students in goal-setting and real-world discussions. This is the role that speech and debate educators play in the lives of students inside and outside of the school day. It is essential that policy and practice decisions be influenced by the accounts of speech and debate educators who explore real-life impacts with students, not in an artificial or contrived sense, but through activities where the conversation is framed around issues that impact the lives of the students and those in their communities.

This implication for policy and practice presented here amplifies the voices of speech and debate educators who have not been able to realize their visions in schools. In discussions about school health reforms, the literature has been made abundantly clear that there is a concerted effort by domestic and international actors to implement health promotion efforts that can improve student lives across various domains. The literature is replete with evidence identifying contributors and influencers of healthy habits. Frankly, the data are daunting because there is a dearth of universally designed curricula and programmatic approaches that address the multifaceted needs of students throughout their formative years. For instance, how do we motivate students, change their mindsets, and improve their health outcomes, and what pedagogical approaches are needed to support these goals? Key insights from the current study suggested that speech and debate has the potential to help students by promoting identity development, mental wellness, psychological strengths, and social-emotional skills at essential

periods of development. As such, speech and debate implications for policy and practice are explored with the goal of informing the way health education is approached for primary school students.

Implications for Practice

Cultural Sensitivity Training. Based on participant accounts, speech and debate has the potential to help professionals connect with students in ways that provide a full and deep understanding of their personal narratives and paths. In particular, low-income, minority communities benefit from the coalescing of culturally responsive and inquiry-based pedagogical practices (Brown, 2017). Thus, rather than cultural sensitivity professional development teacher training, practitioners who engage their students in speech and debate are uniquely positioned to understand their students' community needs, concerns, and norms. Speech and debate can be used to teach practitioners the "do's and don'ts" of cultural competence in real and profound ways. It can be implemented as a stand-alone component but promises the biggest benefits when incorporated across the curriculum. The findings have clear implications for the potential of speech and debate to advance the work of practitioners and schools which embeds a culturally responsive approach to teaching students.

Hands-on Approach. The health benefits that participants identified for students who are engaged in speech and debate are clear. Speech and debate promotes psychological fortitude in ways that improve sense of agency, growth mindset, resilience, and grit. Those benefits are realized from as early as elementary school and well into high school and beyond. In the same way that elementary and middle schools and districts are funding and supporting social-emotional programs, there should be support for speech and debate, which has social and

emotional benefits while also tapping into the cognitive and psychological aspects of the whole child approach.

This support can be facilitated by educating educational practitioners about the value of speech and debate programs for students. The findings of this research study also suggested that community and stakeholder buy-in occurs when community members see the benefits for themselves. It is not enough for them to read a research report or hear the accounts of others. They need to see the impact speech and debate has on the students they serve. Schools and districts need to have their teachers and administrators engage in hands-on practices in which they are teaching the content, attending tournaments, and/or judging speech and debate rounds where they will see their students' talent on display. It is critical that they see their own students' start and end points along the journey.

Implications for Policy

Health Education

All students are not created equally. Given the societal impacts of unresolved trauma, mental health issues, and feelings of disenfranchisement, it is crucial for students to develop the skills to moderate and improve their health outcomes. A significant takeaway from this study is that speech and debate can help students address their issues and positively connect with the social world. The analysis has shown that speech and debate supports healthy development by responding to students' needs and goals, addressing conditions of trauma and adversity, and providing support and opportunities to channel emotions within and beyond the classroom.

Furthermore, the societal benefits for civically engaged students who use their skills to advocate for their needs and community members are significant. For instance, in the school system, the students are the end-users, not the customer. The customer is society because

taxpayers fund what occurs in school. When the next generation cannot participate as active community members, this leads to long-term ripple effects in social ills, such as criminality, mental health, homelessness, and more. Speech and debate instruction in schools has the potential to redress the larger structural impediments that prevent the equal education opportunities of all students.

Health Decisions

Speech and debate helps students overcome health barriers to change. The tools gained from speech and debate contribute to the skill sets necessary to make better health choices and decisions. Speech and debate helps students critically consider the information they are consuming, build confidence and power to speak about the information around them, and calmly and comfortably deal with emotions to make decisions—all of which connect to better health decisions. Notably, in the current post-pandemic era, the ability to evaluate health information, adopt safe health practices, and encourage others to engage in health-saving behaviors is crucial. Education policymakers have an opportunity to improve students' abilities to make sound health decisions by supporting state and local school curricula that help them learn to interrogate evidence, analyze multiple perspectives, articulate their ideas, and regulate their emotions.

Educational Standards

Many view school standards as an impediment to implementing speech and debate. Based on the accounts of the speech and debate professionals, the majority of school administrators accept speech and debate programs when they align with their schools' goals and state standards. Given what we know about its benefits, speech and debate needs to be recognized in the same way that ELA and math classes are recognized. Creating school standards that directly require assessments to gauge student abilities to engage in argumentation and

interrogation of information will shift how schools respond to speech and debate. The implementation of such policies will have hiring implications. It will also necessitate that teachers are trained in speech and debate so they can feel equipped to incorporate it into their classrooms.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the evidence attesting to speech and debate's potential to impact multiple domains of student development, along with what is known about the harms of not addressing students' personal, psychological, and social and emotional needs, the following research could further the understanding of how to harness the power of speech and debate—both for students and for society at large.

Structural Changes

Research should explore how to assist classroom teachers in integrating speech and debate pedagogy instructional techniques into their curricula. It is important that this work be done in collaboration with speech and debate coaches who have experience teaching debate to students. It can help to better understand: What structural changes can be designed in schools to create classroom practice and environments that support speech and debate pedagogy for all students? And what kinds of changes are needed within our education system to support the training and implementation of speech and debate during the school day?

Critical Mass

Social psychologists often examine ideal sizes for high-functioning work groups. Those numbers vary, depending on the team tasks and the roles members play (Podcasts Global Focus, 2006). In examining speech and debate, participants have indicated that small work groups are ideal to keep students on task and to maximize performance. For example, P-107 said, "We try to

keep the ratio of our staff to students to about one staff member to six to eight students. Doing that keeps the kids on tasks. It keeps them engaged at all times." However, as participants spoke about the need to build to scale, the number of members necessary to produce an effective team was unclear. While a minor finding, participants referenced the idea of critical mass to suggest that there was a meaningful number or meaningful representation of student participants necessary to cultivate a productive and prosperous speech and debate environment. When considering the individual and teamwork required for success in speech and debate, how important is group size and in which conditions does it matter? Future research should consider what is the appropriate student critical mass for speech and debate teams to produce a flourishing community. What numbers produce the best outcomes, and what are the conditions in which critical mass is more or less important?

Underserved Communities

This study explored the perceptions of speech and debate coaches from various areas in the United States. While a vast landscape was surveyed, the majority of the findings derived from speech and debate professionals. In many cases, they were competitive debaters who currently held positions as school administrators, coaches, and teachers. The information provided valuable insights into the factors involved in the implementation of speech and debate at the primary school level. However, the accounts of current and active students in the world of speech and debate were not represented. A narrower lens is needed to investigate the first-hand experiences of students in underserved communities. Future research should take a deep dive into understanding the specific concerns and experiences of urban and rural students who participate in speech and debate.

School Administrators' Perceptions

While investigating the factors that influenced school administrators' support of speech and debate, its value was a common theme. However, school administrators' perceptions who have not incorporated speech and debate into their school day or after-school enrichment services are missing. Future research exploring administrators' justification for not offering speech and debate activities would benefit the education community.

Students' Perceptions

Additionally, the first-person perceptions of students are missing from this study. The participants in this study served as secondary sources speculating why students participated and enjoyed speech and debate. The primary voices of students are necessary to improve understanding of their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of speech and debate participation. Thus, the community would benefit from future research investigating the factors influencing why students do or do not decide to participate in speech and debate, how participants describe the benefits, and how non-participants might find speech and debate more appealing.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Script

TEACHERS COLLEGE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
525 West 120th St. * New York, NY 10027 * 212-678-3000
www.tc.columbia.edu/institutional-review-board

Dear _____,

As part of my doctoral studies at Teachers College, Columbia University, I am writing to invite you to participate in my dissertation study titled "Speech and Debate Educators' Perceptions About the Programs in Primary School." You were nominated as an expert in speech and debate by your peers.

The purpose of this study is to begin a line of research to improve understanding about how speech and debate participation can benefit elementary and middle school students. Hence, I am particularly interested in interviewing speech and debate professionals who are involved in school-based debate efforts, but that is not mandatory.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to discuss your opinions and experiences with implementing or maintaining speech and debate efforts, including the impact, (good and bad) it has had in the lives of your students. The interview will be conducted remotely, using Zoom, and it will take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete. If you choose to participate, I'll follow up with more information about the study.

Best,
-Erin Jacques

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Protocol # 21-347

TEACHERS COLLEGE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
525 West 120th St. * New York, NY 10027 * 212-678-3000
www.tc.columbia.edu/institutional-review-board

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

Protocol Title: Speech and Debate Educators' Perceptions About the Programs in Primary School
Principal Researcher: Erin Jacques, PhD, (EdD candidate)
Contact: erin@earlyscholars.org, et2592@tc.columbia.edu or 347-500-8660

INTRODUCTION You are invited to participate in an interview about speech and debate. You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are involved in speech and debate efforts and are over 18 years of age.

This study will include data collection from professionals who are actively or were previously involved in speech and debate within the last five years. It will be geographically limited to those professionals who work in the United States. It will take 45-60 minutes to complete the interview via Zoom.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE? This study is being done to better understand the educational and health benefits of speech and debate participation to primary school students, and the challenges educators experience when implementing speech and debate programs.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
During the interview you will be asked to discuss your experience with implementing speech and debate efforts, including the impact, (good and bad) it has had in the lives of your students. This interview will be conducted remotely, using Zoom as the online platform. The interview will be audio and video recorded. If you choose not to have your image visible, you can turn off your camera. Transcripts of the audio recordings will be prepared. The interview will take between 45-60 mins.

1) You will be identified as a participant in the study, yet your individual responses will not be connected and traced back to you; your responses will remain confidential.
2) You will then be asked to answer some questions about yourself, such as your age, race, ethnicity, highest level of education, and years working in the field. We will then go through interview questions to discuss your experiences in speech and debate efforts and programs.

3) At the end of the interview, I will ask you to nominate 3 to 5 speech and debate leaders who are involved in school-based speech and debate efforts. All of this will be done at a day and time that is convenient to you.
4) About a week after the interview, I will send you a summary of our conversation and ask you to verify that I have interpreted your responses correctly. I may use your direct quotes, which may include phrases, complete sentences, or extended responses in publications and/or manuscripts. I will not share anything that could personally identify you.

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. You might feel uncomfortable answering certain question about experiences in your profession. You do not have to answer any questions or share anything you do not want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit speech and debate educators who are involved in school-based efforts.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY? You will not be paid to participate.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?
The study is over when you have completed the individual interview and the demographic questionnaire. But you can stop participating at any time. Your participation is completely voluntary.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY I am taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity, such as using a pseudonym instead of your name and keeping all information on a password protected computer. When reporting results, nothing you say will be attributed to you.

For quality assurance, the study team, the sponsor (Dr. Charles Basch) and/or members of the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) may review the data collected from you as part of this study. Otherwise, all information obtained from your participation in this study will be held strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by U.S. or State law.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED? The results of this study may be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the researcher.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING Audio recording is part of this research study. You must give permission to be recorded to participate in this research study.

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?
If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the primary researcher, Erin Jacques, PhD, at erin@earlyscholars.org, et2592@tc.columbia.edu or 347-500-8660. You can also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Charles Basch at ceb35@tc.columbia.edu

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 10027, Box 151. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- I have read the Informed Consent Form and have been offered the opportunity to discuss the form with the researcher.
- I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at the researcher's professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the researcher will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- De-identified data may be used for future research studies or distributed to another researcher for future research without additional informed consent from you (the research participant or the research participant's representative).
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent Form document.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study:

Print Name:

Signature: _____

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

TEACHERS COLLEGE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
525 West 120th St. * New York, NY 10027 * 212-678-3000
www.tc.columbia.edu/institutional-review-board

Dear _____,

Thank you for accepting my invitation to participate in an interview about speech and debate. You were invited to participate because you were nominated as an expert in the field.

Before we begin, I want to make sure you received the consent I emailed you and ask if you have any questions. I will turn on the recording to capture the audio and confirm your consent, and I will keep the recording on for the duration of the interview. If you choose to turn off your camera, that is fine, as I only need to capture the audio of the recorded conversation.

Now that the recording is on: Do you agree to participate in the interview and have our conversation recorded?
The questions are organized around three main themes: Student Benefits, Curricula Attributes, and Implementation Factors. There are no right or wrong answers. I just want to know your opinions

To get started, I'll ask you about the speech and debate benefits experienced by students you've worked with?

	STUDENT BENEFITS **RQ1: What do speech and debate professionals perceive are the educational and health benefits of speech and debate?**
1.	What are the some of the main benefits of speech and debate for primary school students? **Probes:** Have you witnessed any (other) educational benefits? Have you witnessed any (other) health benefits? Are there any other student benefits?
2.	Can you tell me a story of a student who experienced a positive transformation? **Probes:** How do you think that speech and debate played a role in this transformation? Can you give me an example, or explain more?
3.	As you think of the different benefits we've discussed, what do you think are the most important outcomes of a successful program? **Probe:** How are those outcomes measured? Can you share any stories?

Now, I'd like to learn more about the attributes of a successful speech and debate curriculum.

	CURRICULA ATTRIBUTES **RQ2: How do speech and debate professionals define the curricula attributes of a successful speech and debate program?**
1.	What is taught in a speech and debate program?
2.	What pedagogical approaches do instructors use to teach speech and debate? **Probe:** How do the approaches used for speech and debate differ from the approaches used to teach required courses in schools?
3.	As you think of the different curricula approaches we've discussed, what do you think are the most important attributes of a successful curriculum? **Probes:** Has the pandemic altered your view in anyway? Can you share any stories of an exemplar program? What, if anything, do you think would be different after the pandemic ends?

I'll now turn the attention to factors that contribute to successful implementation of speech and debate programs in schools.

	FEASIBILITY FACTORS **RQ3: What do speech and debate professionals describe as factors that influence the feasibility of a successful speech and debate program?**
1.	What do speech and debate programs need to thrive? **Probe**: If the participant does not discuss resources or structure, follow up with: How are successful programs resourced? How are successful programs structured?
2.	Can you tell me about a successful speech and debate program you've been a part of? **Probe**: Has the pandemic impacted the program? How do you see that changing after the pandemic?

	ACCEPTABILITY FACTORS **RQ4: What do speech and debate professionals describe as factors that influence the acceptability of a successful speech and debate program?**
1.	Who are the different stakeholders in speech and debate? **Probe:** What role do the stakeholders play in the implementation of speech and debate?
2.	In your experience who have been the biggest supporters of speech and debate? **Probe:** Why do you think these individuals have been so supportive?

Thank you for participating. Is there anything you'd like to discuss or anything you'd like to modify about what we've discussed today?

Before we end, I will ask you some questions about yourself that will be used to describe the study sample.

Demographic Nomination Questionnaire

1. How would you describe your primary role in the speech & debate community?

___ Coach
___ Consultant
___ Director
___ Administrator/Executive
___ Other, please specify _____

2. Which of the following areas do you primarily service?

___ Urban/City, specify city/state_____
___ Suburban, specify city/state _____
___ Rural, specify city/state _____

3. Currently, what type of educational entity do you primarily service?

___ Middle School
___ High School
___ Speech & Debate Organization (for-profit)
___ Community Based Organization (nonprofit)
___ Speech & Debate League
___ Speech & Debate Associations
___ Other, please specify

4. What is your highest level of education?

___ High School Diploma
___ Associates Degree
___ Bachelor's Degree
___ Graduate Degree

5. How would you describe your race?

___ Black
___ White
___ Asian
___ Mixed Race
___ Other

6. How would you describe your ethnicity?

___ Hispanic
___ Non-Hispanic
___ Other

7. What is your gender?

___ Male
___ Female
___ Other

8. What is your age?

___ Below 25
___ 25 to 39
___ 40 to 60
___60 plus

Please nominate 3 to 5 people who are leaders in school-based speech and debate efforts who may be willing to participate in the research study.

Given all the professionals you know, what made you nominate these people?

Appendix D: Codebook 4.0

Appendix D: Codebook 4.0	
STUDENT BENEFITS	**Code definition**
Social Emotional Skills	Participants refer to self awareness, self managment, social awareness, responsible decision making, and relationship skills; personal confidence and growth, building team skills, forming relationships / includes leadership skills and conflict resolution
Academic Achievement	Participant refers to improved reading comprehenion, GPA, test scores, selective HS entrance, and college admission; Cognitive improvement, research and writing skills, includes listening skills
Civic Literacy	Participants refer to students improved civic awareness and civic engagement; political and social consciousness
Critical Thinking	Participants refer to words and phrases that include analyzing, logic, rational, evidence driven; argumentative skills, advocate for multiple perspetives, problem solving skills
Health Promotion	Participants refer to students improved mental, physical and emotional wellness
Curricula Attributes	
Speech & Debate Disposition	Participants reference general skills necessary for building interpersonal and intrapersonal skills such as persuasion, public speaking, confidence building, how to carry yourself, attire, adaptability, peer collaboration; leadership, teaching others, programs that offer safe space for curiosity
Pedagogical Approach (Learning/ Teaching, Structure)	Culturally and racial sensitive and relevant teaching, respect for all space, small groups, more discussion, visual aids for instruction, available technology, student centered teaching, collaborative approach
Evaluation & Assessment	Judge, peer evals, competitions-formal or informal
Technical, HARD skills	Weighing arguments, refutation, flowing arguments/note taking, case writing, crossfire, speech structure, research, asking good questions, summarizing thoughts, speech strategy, includes topic knowledge-- historical and geopolitical affairs
Feasibility Factors	
Time	Participants reference time to implement
Money	Participants reference money to implement
Technology	Participants reference technology to implement
Staff to Student Ratio	Participants reference personnel needed to implement
Staff Expertise	Knowledge of how to teach speech and debate curriculm. Staff understnand the needs and challenges of the community and have experience with students they are servicing
Training	Participants reference training for students and teachers to implement
Physical Space	Participants reference physical space
School/State Standard	Participants referenc alignment between school goals and speech and debate
Acceptability Factors	
Coach/ Teacher Factors	Participants who reference motivation among the teaching staff as influential. Particpants may aso include training and alignment as factors that impact teachers' motivation to implement speech and debate training.
Admin Factors	Participants who reference motivation among the admin staff as influential.
Student Factors	Participants who reference motivation among the students sas being influential
Parent Factors	Participants reference support among parents to support changes and effort to implement instructional change.

Appendix E: RQ1 Main Findings

Participants	SEL	Civic Literacy	Critical Thinking	Academic	Health Promotion
P-103	X	X	X	X	X
P-104	X	X	X	X	X
P-105	X	X		X	X
P-106	X		X	X	X
P-107	X		X	X	
P-108	X			X	
P-109	X		X		X
P-110	X	X	X	X	
P-111	X	X	X	X	X
P-112	X	X	X	X	X
P-113	X		X		X
P-114	X	X	X	X	X
P-115	X	X	X		
P-116	X	X	X		
P-117	X		X		
P-118	X	X	X	X	X
P-119	X		X	X	
P-120	X	X	X	X	X
P-121	X	X	X	X	X
P-122	X	X	X	X	X
P-123	X	X	X		X
P-124	X	X	X		X
P-125	X	X	X		
P-126	X	X	X	X	X
P-127	X	X	X	X	X
TOTAL	100%	72%	92%	68%	68%

Appendix F: RQ2 Main Findings

Participants	Pedagogical Approach	Hard Skills	Disposition (Soft Skills)
P-103	X	X	
P-104	X	X	
P-105	X	X	
P-106	X	X	
P-107	X	X	
P-108	X	X	
P-109	X	X	
P-110	X	X	X
P-111		X	X
P-112	X	X	X
P-113	X	X	
P-114	X	X	
P-115	X	X	X
P-116			
P-117	X	X	
P-118	X		
P-119	X	X	
P-120	X		
P-121	X	X	X
P-122	X		
P-123	X	X	X
P-124	X		
P-125		X	X
P-126	X		
P-127	X		
TOTAL	**88%**	**72%**	**28%**

Appendix G: RQ3 Main Findings

Participants	Money	Pandemic	Training	Time
P-103	X	X	X	X
P-104	X		X	
P-105		X	X	X
P-106	X			X
P-107	X	X	X	
P-108				X
P-109				X
P-110	X	X	X	
P-111		X		X
P-112	X	X	X	X
P-113	X		X	X
P-114	X	X		X
P-115			X	X
P-116				X
P-117	X	X		X
P-118	X			X
P-119	X	X	X	X
P-120	**X**	**X**	X	X
P-121	**X**	**X**		X
P-122			X	X
P-123	X	X		X
P-124		X	X	X
P-125				X
P-126	X	X	X	X
P-127	X		X	X
TOTAL	**64%**	**56%**	**56%**	**88%**

Appendix H: RQ4 Main Findings

Participants	Coaches/ Teachers	Student	Parent	School Admins
P-103	X	X	X	
P-104		X		X
P-105		X		X
P-106	X	X		X
P-107	X		X	
P-108		X		X
P-109				
P-110	X	X	X	
P-111	X	X	X	
P-112				X
P-113	X	X	X	X
P-114	X	X		
P-115	X	X	X	
P-116				X
P-117		X		X
P-118	X	X	X	X
P-119	X	X		X
P-120	X	X		X
P-121	X	X	X	
P-122	X		X	X
P-123	X	X		X
P-124	X		X	
P-125				
P-126				X
P-127		X	X	X
TOTAL	**60%**	**68%**	**44%**	**60%**

Appendix I: RQ4 Acceptability

Coaches/Teachers

	P-103	P-106	P-107	P-110	P-111	P-113	P-114	P-115	P-118	P-119	P-120	P-121	P-122	P-123	P-124	Total
Alignment								X						X		7%
Perceived Value*	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	87%
Pay		X		X	X											20%

*Perceived value: coaches' feelings of enjoyment and seeing the benefits for students

Students

	P-103	P-104	P-105	P-106	P-108	P-110	P-111	P-113	P-114	P-115	P-117	P-118	P-119	P-120	P-121	P-123	P-127	Total
Perceived Value*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100%
Built Community		X					X	X		X								23%

*Perceived value: students' feelings of on intrinsic benefits (confidence and motivation) and extrinsic rewards (awards and college admission)

School Administrators

	P-104	P-105	P-106	P-108	P-112	P-113	P-116	P-117	P-118	P-119	P-120	P-122	P-123	P-126	P-127	Total
Alignment*	X	X					X	X		X			X	X	X	53%
Educated on S&D								X								7%
Parental pressure					X	X			X			X				33%
Ranking/PR			X	X							X					20%

*Alignment: School districts' visions of perceived value as it pertains to school standards and/or administrators' visions of perceived value

Parents

	P-103	P-107	P-110	P-111	P-113	P-115	P-118	P-121	P-122	P-124	P-127	Total
Perceived Value*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100%

*Perceived value: parents' seeing their children experience the intrinsic benefits (confidence and motivation) and extrinsic rewards (awards and college admission)

Appendix J: IRB Approval

Attachments:
- FINAL Appendix B- 6-14.pdf
- Exemption Notification - IRB ID: 21-347.pdf

TEACHERS COLLEGE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Teachers College IRB *Exempt Study Approval*

To: Erin Jacques
From: Kailee Kodama Muscente, Administrative Coordinator
Subject: IRB Approval: 21-347 Protocol
Date: 06/16/2021

Thank you for submitting your study entitled, "*Speech and Debate Educators' Perceptions About the Programs in Primary School*;" the IRB has determined that your study is **Exempt** from committee review (Category **2**) on 06/16/2021.

Due to COVID-19 quarantine, all in-person study activities with human subjects are suspended. Following guidance from New York State and Teachers College, the Institutional Review Board will announce when in-person research can resume and what steps to take at that time.

Please keep in mind that the IRB Committee must be contacted if there are any changes to your research protocol. The number assigned to your protocol is **21-347**. Feel free to contact the IRB Office by using the "Messages" option in the electronic Mentor IRB system if you have any questions about this protocol.

Please note that your Consent form bears an official IRB authorization stamp and is attached to this email. Copies of this form with the IRB stamp must be used for your research work. Further, all research recruitment materials must include the study's IRB-approved protocol number.

As the PI of record for this protocol, you are required to:

- Use current, up-to-date IRB approved documents
- Ensure all study staff and their CITI certifications are on record with the IRB
- Notify the IRB of any changes or modifications to your study procedures
- Alert the IRB of any adverse events

You are also required to respond if the IRB communicates with you directly about any aspect of your protocol. Failure to adhere to your responsibilities as a study PI can result in action by the IRB up to and including suspension of your approval and cessation of your research.

You can retrieve a PDF copy of this approval letter from Mentor IRB.

Best wishes for your research work.

Sincerely,
Kailee Kodama Muscente
Administrative Coordinator
IRB@tc.edu