

WISCONSIN STATE DEBATE TOURNAMENT REFORM OPTIONS

WDCA SPRING MEETING 2009

Option #1—Status Quo Format at a High School

The first option is to continue with the status quo format of a Friday/Saturday event hosted by a high school; rounds begin on Friday afternoon and continue through Saturday evening.

Pros

- Maintains current system/does not require format changes

Cons

- Difficult to find a tournament host, especially ones in different regions of the state
- The schedule is condensed such that there is minimal time between rounds and long days (early start/late finish), especially in VSS
- Finding enough rooms and judges to schedule VSS/V4/LD/PF on Friday is difficult

Option #2—Status Quo Format at a College/University

The second option is to continue with the status quo format of a Friday/Saturday event but host the tournament at a college or university.

Pros

- Maintains current system/does not require format changes
- Adds to the prestige of the tournament b/c hosted by a college/university, especially if a permanent location can be secured
- Easy to plan for because WSDT would be in the same location every year

Cons

- So far it has proven impossible to find a tournament host
- The schedule is condensed such that there is minimal time between rounds and long days (early start/late finish), especially in VSS
- Finding enough rooms and judges to schedule VSS/V4/LD/PF on Friday is difficult – more so than at a HS. (Colleges have class on Friday)

Option #3—Saturday/Sunday with Current Number of Rounds

The third option is to shift to a Saturday/Sunday format (either with a high school or college/university host). Call-in registration would occur on Friday night and debates would begin on Saturday morning; novice/JV/middle school would occur exclusively on Saturday while VSS/V4/LD/PF would occur on Saturday and Sunday.

Pros

- Provides several more hours of available time in which to schedule rounds, resulting in a more relaxed tournament
- Expands the available number of tournament hosts to include those that do not have room availability on Friday
- Maintains the current number of debates in each division

Cons

- For those traveling long distances, requires lodging on Friday and Saturday nights
- Might make it difficult for squads who want to send their JV/novice/MS students home after competition ends
- Might make it harder to convince judges from other divisions to stay for extra rounds of VSS/V4/LD/PF
- Requires a separate awards ceremonies for JV/novice/MS on Saturday evening

(continued)

Option #4—Saturday/Sunday with Expanded Number of Rounds

The fourth option is to move to a Saturday/Sunday format *and* expand the number of rounds in novice, JV, and (possibly) middle school to six. Four rounds would be held in every division on Saturday with the final two prelims on Sunday; elimination rounds would then follow in VSS/LD/PF (and possibly V4—see separate proposal).

Pros

- See benefits of previous proposal
- Would create true "championship" events in JV/novice/MS
- Would allow for a unified awards ceremony on Sunday afternoon

Cons

- See problems with previous proposal
- Would place a higher burden on tabulation staff; would need additional personnel capable of tabulating four-person divisions on TRPC
- Would require JV/novice/MS squads from outside the local area to secure lodging at least on Saturday night
- Some divisions might not be able to run six rounds

Supplemental Option—Elimination of JV

The JV division could be eliminated at the WSDT. JV would remain a sanctioned event during the competition season but students that qualified in JV would compete in VSS/V4 at the WSDT.

Pros

- Expands the varsity divisions to include many more teams
- Provides teams with an incentive to move up to varsity during the season once they have qualified in JV
- Prevents disputes over what constitutes a "JV" debater
- Encourages programs to pursue varsity-level debate rather than keep experienced students in JV
- Reduces the tabulation burden by eliminating a division

Cons

- Students who do not want to compete in Varsity will not be able to attend the WSDT
- Might encourage coaches to keep students in novice rather than move them up to JV
- JV is good

Supplemental Option—Elimination Rounds for V4

Elimination rounds could be added in V4. The top four teams, for example, would clear to the semifinals. The first seed would debate the fourth seed with the winner of the coin flip being allowed to select which side of the resolution they will represent. That half of the V4 team would debate the other half of the opponents' V4 team; the remaining four members would remain "on the sidelines" for that debate. The winner advances to the finals.

Pros

- Provides parity between VSS and V4
- Creates a true "championship" event

Cons

- Requires additional rounds—that means more rooms, more judges, and more time at the tournament
- One-half of each team is not debating in each elimination round