

social dynamics in the group); they will work better with people they have chosen. Set up a 'leader board', with teams ranked according to their performance over the year: two points for a win, one for a tie; if they tie on points, position determined by total number of speaker points. Set up a page for the club on Google Classroom (or whichever social media app your school uses) and post the leader board on it, along with teaching materials and reminders about meetings. The advantage of the leader board system is that it is dynamic and constantly shifting. Teams have something invested in it until the end of the season, and are motivated to act on the feedback you give them and improve. To ensure a fair outcome, have a fixed number of debates scheduled for the year, with each team having the same number of debates (ideally each team debating against each other team at least once) and then award a trophy to the team which is top of the leader board at the end of the season.

Use the school's reward system - commendations, merits, house points, whatever you have - to recognise the contribution and commitment of debaters. If your school has a 'colours' system for recognising achievement in sport, negotiate to have it extended to debating.

Some schools focus exclusively on an elite half dozen debaters, drilling them ruthlessly to win competitions and fill the trophy cabinet with silverware. That has never been my approach; while debating is a competitive activity, and should be approached competitively, I believe in inclusivity, and I measure success by the number of students taking part.

That said, it is often the case that debating clubs tend to attract ambitious, gifted and talented students. The debating club can be an invaluable way for such students to meet and make friends with like minded students. In some cases, if they are in a school where it isn't cool to be clever, the club can be something of a refuge. Similarly, if your school is one where sporting success is highly valued, debating can provide an opportunity to shine at a competitive activity for students who do not enjoy sport.

Do whatever you can to build an *esprit de corps* in the club. Organise a cake rota for meetings. Get hoodies or T shirts printed, with a debating club logo. Have a club outing to the local pizza restaurant at the end of the year.

**Students
are highly
motivated
by
competition**

If you can, take the competition outside the club to the wider school. Work within the school's existing structures as far as possible. Many schools have a house system, which is used for sports, drama and music competitions. Add debating to the list of competitions, preferably with a competition for each age group. This will greatly increase the interest in and visibility of debating. House leaders and members of the house will encourage students to take part, and will turn up to debates to support their house. If your school doesn't have a house system, or similar pastoral divisions, have students enter a school wide competition as self-chosen teams. Work towards a high profile final for each competition. Ideally, run a leader board system (see above) in order to sustain interest throughout the year, and stage the final between the top two teams. If you don't have time for this, run a 'knock-out' system. In this system, teams are drawn at random to compete against each other in rounds. After each round, the losing teams are eliminated, reducing the number of teams by half. Then another round is set up and run, eliminating another half of the teams, and so on until you have just two teams left, who compete in the final, the winning team being awarded the trophy.

Keep as high a profile as you can for debating within your school. If you can negotiate it, have a whole year group, or even Key Stage, off timetable to watch the debating finals. If your budget allows, invest in trophies for all the competitions, and get winners' names engraved on them. Have them presented in Assembly. Take photos of both internal and external competitions (see below) and post them in your school newsletter, on the school website, on the school social media feed, even in the local press. Senior leadership will appreciate the raising of the school's profile in this way, and will be motivated to support debating more.

External competitions

Even more motivating for students than internal competition is the opportunity to take part in external competitions. They do of course mean more teacher time, mostly in the evenings, in addition to the considerable amount of paperwork required whenever you take students out of school. However, the honour of representing the school and the excitement of travelling to other venues and meeting other students means a lot to students, and will greatly increase their loyalty to the club and to debating. It will hugely improve their debating skills, particularly if they find themselves

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