

Introduction: The Presidential debates are exercises designed to allow your campaign team the opportunity to strengthen your skills in the areas of leadership, team building, group problem solving, and presentation. The debates give your campaign team the opportunity to present your ideas to your voters and opposition. The debates will consist of the Secretary, President and Vice President. Each member should be well informed and able to answer each of the questions presented.

Provide detailed explanations for each question. Be prepared to question your opposition and defend your stance.

Guidelines for the Debate

Opening statement from each Secretary of Education

Question posed by Mr. Patten or Ms. Dennis

1-2 minute response from each of the Secretaries

Crossfire between the Secretaries

This format will continue until the end of the debate. The Secretary, President and Vice President may take turns answering questions.

Education Debate will take place on : May 1st

Education:

1. Do you believe there really is a crisis in American education? Explain. Examples: programs, classes, teachers, college preparedness, academic achievements, etc.

We do believe that there is a education crisis in America, but if we do something about it now we can prevent it from getting worse. A current situation that we need to address is the rate of students who dropout of high school for various reasons. There is a 83.2% overall graduation rate in the United States, which isn't horrific, but could be improved. About 1.2 million high school students dropout every year, some examples as to why are they are missing too many days, having to go get a job in order to help provide for their family, failing grades, or even major life events, such as pregnancy or getting arrested. Another trend that can be seen throughout schools in America is the difference in rate of graduates in wealthy and poor neighborhoods. The schools and towns with more money tend to have a higher graduation rate than those districts in poorer communities. For example, Hempstead and Freeport have graduation rates of 43% and 79%, meanwhile the school districts of Syosset, Garden City and Bellmore-Merrick have graduation rates of 99%, 98.65%, and 95% respectively. As seen by these statistics, we can see there is an obvious imbalance in our education systems. It is insane to see that two towns right next to each other, Bellmore-Merrick/Freeport and Garden City/Hempstead, can have such different outcomes in their schools and students. We need to figure out what these school are doing differently from one another in order to improve them. We also need to figure out what the teachers in all of these schools are doing to keep their students motivated and engaged in learning. We need to take into account all of the questions these problems pose, including how to keep kids in school, how to motivate them, what programs are schools offering for kids having trouble, and last but not least how are teachers impacting kids in the long run.

2. What do you believe is the greatest problem in American education today? How does your administration plan to combat this issue? Explain.

We believe the greatest problem in American education system today is that we focus too much of our time

preparing students for these standardized tests. We should be more focused on preparing the students for college and their future in the real world. If we got rid of standardized tests there would be less stress on the students and they would be able to focus more on things like, extra curricular activities, sports, assigned projects, as well as homework. We believe that the SAT and ACT are also unfair exams. They make students crack under an extremely tight time cap and don't fully allow them to show their full knowledge of the subject. Not only with the regents, but with these college entrance exams they are a poor representation of a student because there are a lot of students who just aren't good test takers.

Another big issue in schools is students dropping out. When these kids dropout of school, they usually can't make it in the real world. They then resort to a life of drugs and crime since they have no other way for providing for themselves or their family. High school dropouts are missing out on making a future for themselves and getting a college education. It is proven that high school dropouts make a significantly less amount of money than a high school or even college graduate would make over the course of a lifetime. The reason why kids drop out varies, but most of the time it is because they are not motivated to stay. The classes are boring and they are not interesting to some students. I think our teachers can fix this issue by making their classes more interactive and hands on. We also should make periods shorter, and therefore add more periods in, so that kids can take more electives. We need to help the kids who struggle to stay in school engaged and wanted to learn more. Additionally, we can offer night classes for kids who have to work during the day to earn money for their family. We can also change some courses by adding in classes that kids want to take if they are trying to pursue a career instead of going to college.

3. How does your administration plan to increase the nation's high school completion rate? Explain. - Include programs, support services, etc Our administration plans to increase the nation's high school completion rate. We want to create programs that specialize in the kids that aren't meeting the standards for the curriculum. With this program, these students guidance counselors can have a constant overview of that certain students academic strengths and weaknesses. By knowing these facts, the administration can figure out a way for the student to meet all of the criteria before graduation. The program will also focus on the weaknesses and will create new strengths and confidence in their abilities. With the constant overview, guidance counselors and administration will monitor the students progress, just like they do for the kids who have many academic strengths. Also, through tests and quizzes, we can challenge kids but at a level that coincides with their strengths. Once each kids reaches the criteria, they will be re-evaluated and will hopefully be introduced into normal classrooms, but if they feel as if these classes are helping them, they can stay in them as long as they would like. Our administration want children to feel confident in their academic abilities. With this confidence, kids will try harder, which will put an increase in completion rates.

4. What is your stance on standardized testing? Do you believe standardized testing serves a purpose? Explain.

We believe that standardized testing should be eliminated because it can create a lot of stress on students. Every student know that April, May, and June are the worst months because that means a ton of review and prep for these challenging test the lie ahead. The only good thing about this time is that students know that just around the corner is summer vacation. Along with all the stress these standardized test cause is a ton of pressure to do well, which can lead negative attitudes and low confidence levels. These test evaluate not only students, but teachers as well on a unfair level. The tests only evaluate certain areas of learning like reading, writing, math, and science skills and don't evaluate such skills like creativity and imagination. The SAT and ACT can be up to 5 hours long and the regents up to 3 hours, these tests are extremely exhausting and unmotivating, and it is also very difficult to focus and concentrate for that amount of time. Additionally, teachers spend majority of the year preparing students for these exams, they don't have the time to teach students skills that go beyond the tests. The regents is something that the teachers don't know the exact material that will be on it and can only prepare the students for what they know. In the end, the test have majority of what the teachers have taught throughout the course of the year, but student can't comprehend most of the questions because they are too wordy and have extra information that is not needed in order to trick the student. Our country needs to think of alternative ways to assess how much students learn at the end of the school year. For example, Finland is ranking higher than the US in math, reading, and science. The Finnish education system has gone through many changes over the last 40 years. They have moved away from standardized tests and now assess students with school-based, student-centered, open-ended

tasks that are embedded in the curriculum. There are no mandated standardized tests in Finland, apart from one exam at the end of students' senior year in high school which is still optional, even though most students take it anyway. Also this test is not required to graduated high school or even to get into college. There are no rankings, no comparisons or competition between students either. Schools in Finland are obviously doing something right because they are ranked higher than the US in every subject. If we take Finland's ideas and apply them in our own education system we can improve our schools for our children.

5. What other methods can be used to assess our students and teachers? Provide specific examples to support.

Standardized testing punishes the students and teachers, it makes student dread attending school and puts a significant weight on teachers shoulders to teach the material as quickly as possible. This creates a rift between students and teachers along with a general trusting relationship between them. Teachers should know how each students work and their pace. By the teachers knowing their work pace, students can have more individual extra help. There should be more group projects and labs for the students to work together. By working together, students will become more confident with their capabilities. Also, with group work and labs, teachers will feel less pressure to teach the material as quick as possible. Students will have hands on learning activities that will help then to understand the curriculum. By creating these labs, there would be a more equal opportunity instead of the standardized tests which cause the students stress. Alongside with group work, teachers can have more observations during class time. This will really show how each teacher teaches and prepares their students for these exams. There are new methods that can be used to assess our students and teachers.

6. How do you plan to ensure that students around the United States are college and career ready when they graduate from High School? Explain with specific examples. We plan to ensure that students around the United States are college and career ready when they graduate from High School. We will put together after school programs dedicated to make sure that our students are ready to move on to the next step of their career. These programs can include seminars to put together college essays and resumes. The program can also include a section for mock interviews for college and future jobs. Also, children need to be prepared for their life once they are finished with their education. Kids these days don't know how to mortgage a house, lease a car, or pay their own bills. High schools need to take a lesson from the middle schools and start to include more classes that revolve around home life to their schedules. According to the New York Post, almost 60% of Americans wouldn't have enough savings in their bank accounts to pay for a \$500 expense that came about suddenly. A high school dropout earns about \$200,000 less than someone who has a high school degree and almost 1 million dollars less than a college graduate. Students need to learn how save their money and learn when to spend it. We plan to create programs around the United States to make sure that students are college and career ready once they graduate high school.

7. Education has been called the "great equalizer." Do you believe this statement rings true today in the United States? Explain why or why not. * If you do not agree with this statement, how do you plan to change things? Explain.

Education in the United States is not the great equalizer because it is all based around class status and how much money you have. In America, not many students have an equal opportunity to succeed due to poverty which is reducing our graduation rates. Some students aren't even able to finish school. No matter what sort of financial background you have, I believe that everyone should have the opportunity to a higher education. Unfortunately, that is not the the case in America. Schools with low-income students receive fewer resources, face greater difficulties attracting qualified teachers, face many more challenges in addressing students needs, and receive less support from parents.

8. What security measures do you believe need to be implemented into our schools in order to ensure the safety of America's students and teachers? Provide specific examples and explanations.

Security measures need to be implemented into our schools in order to ensure the safety of America's students and teachers. A school in Indiana, which is one of the safest schools in America, has many good ideas when it comes to the students safety. Teachers have emergency buttons that they can press in the event of an emergency. This button sets off a school wide alarm and notifies local law enforcements. students then barricade themselves into a corner out of view from a shooter looking through a window of a locked and bulletproof door. The cameras in the hallways are directly linked to the local police department so they can watch what is happening in the building. If the police see something out of the ordinary in the hallway, they can shoot smoke

out of cannons to distract and limit the visibility of the suspect. This is costly and would be a lot of work for every single school in America to do, but it is a good idea. We could use some of the things that this school has and put them into our school systems. We should also make sure all of our teachers and students know how to react in case of an emergency. We also need to create an environment in our schools that kids feel comfortable reporting suspicious behavior and if they know of someone who wants to harm themselves or others. Kids know what is expected of them but they need to know it is okay to report it. Our schools should have a good relationship with local law enforcements and have a way to contact them immediately in case of an emergency. We also should have only one or two main entrances and make sure that those entrances are watched at all times. Security cameras should be installed in the parking lots and outside of school so you can see any suspicious people not only in the hallways, but outside walking around too. Kids and parents should be notified immediately either by email or a text message that the school is in lock down and to stay away if there is a potential threat. Schools should perform practice lockdowns and drills once a month to prepare kids in case of an emergency. Schools should also be open to any ideas from their students and staff. We want to create an environment that lets students feel comfortable, but our priority is to ensure our children's safety.