KIRKWOOD
SCHOOL DISTRICT

DEBATE 7/8

Board of Education Approved August 12, 2025

Course Description:
This Debate course focuses on the essential skills of research, evidence gathering, organization, and public speaking. Students will develop their abilities to construct and present arguments through structured debates, congressional simulations, and persuasive speeches. Students will enhance their critical thinking, research, and communication skills by engaging with contemporary issues and participating in various debate formats.

Grade Level: 7th and 8th Grade (semester)

Unit Scope and Sequence

Unit 1: Introduction to Debate
Unit 2: Power of Persuasion
Unit 3: Middle School Public Debate Program (MSPDP)
Unit 4: Congressional Debate
Unit 5: Lincoln-Douglas Debate
Unit 6: Public Forum Debate

Course Enduring Understandings:

- Effective debate requires thorough research, credible evidence, and clear organization.
- Persuasion in debate involves understanding and utilizing different types of appeals and credible sources.
- Different debate formats have unique structures, rules, and strategies that must be mastered.
- Participation in debate enhances critical thinking, public speaking, and the ability to analyze and respond to opposing viewpoints.

Course Essential Questions:

- How do effective research and evidence gathering contribute to successful debate?
- What are the key components of persuasive communication?
- How do different debate formats influence the way arguments are structured and presented?
- In what ways does participating in debate help develop critical thinking and public speaking skills?

DEBATE 7/8
UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO DEBATE

This unit introduces students to the fundamental concepts of debate, including its purpose and various types of speech and debate formats.

Unit Essential Learning Targets	
Enduring Understandings	***Essential Questions***
• Debate is a structured method of presenting and defending arguments. • Different types of speech and debate formats serve different purposes and require specific skills.	• What is the purpose of debate? • How do different debate formats vary in structure and objectives?
Students must know:	***Students must be able to:***
• Definition and purpose of debate • Various types of debate and speech formats	• Identify and describe different types of debate • Understand the role and importance of debate in society

Missouri Learning Standards
Read and comprehend informational text independently and proficiently (MLS.8.RI.3.D). • Speak clearly, audibly and to the point, using conventions of language as appropriate to task, purpose and audience when presenting including appropriate volume, clear articulation and accurate pronunciation at an understandable pace (MLS.8.SL.2.A).

DEBATE 7/8
UNIT 2: POWER OF PERSUASION

This unit focuses on the techniques of persuasive communication, including types of appeals, analyzing credible sources, and the elements of persuasive writing and speaking.

Unit Essential Learning Targets	
Enduring Understandings	***Essential Questions***
• Persuasive communication involves using different types of appeals effectively. • Credibility of sources is crucial for constructing persuasive arguments.	• What are the different types of appeals in persuasive communication? • How can one determine the credibility of a source?
Students must know:	***Students must be able to:***
• Types of appeals (ethos, pathos, logos) • Criteria for credible sources • Basics of persuasive writing and speaking	• Analyze and use different types of appeals • Evaluate the credibility of sources • Write and deliver persuasive speeches

Missouri Learning Standards

Analyze two or more texts that provide conflicting information on the same topic, and identify where the texts disagree on matter of fact or interpretation (MLS.8.RI.3.B).

- Conduct research to answer a question (including a self-generated question); gather relevant, credible sources, print and digital; integrate information using a standard citation system (MLS.8.WE.1.A.a).

Delineate a speaker's argument and claims, evaluating reasoning and sufficiency of evidence in order to pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations and ideas (MLS.8.SL.1.B).

- Speak clearly, audibly and to the point, using conventions of language as appropriate to task, purpose and audience when presenting including appropriate volume, clear articulation and accurate pronunciation at an understandable pace (MLS.8.SL.1.B).

DEBATE 7/8
UNIT 3: MIDDLE SCHOOL PUBLIC DEBATE PROGRAM (MSPDP)

This unit covers the structure and rules of the MSPDP, focusing on note-taking, researching evidence, embedding sources, reasoning, points of information, rebuttals/refutations, and evaluation criteria

Unit Essential Learning Targets	
Enduring Understandings	***Essential Questions***
• The structure and rules of MSPDP are essential for fair and effective debates. • Critical thinking and evidence-based reasoning are key components of successful debates.	• What is the structure and rules of MSPDP? • How can effective note-taking and evidence gathering improve debate performance?
Students must know:	***Students must be able to:***
• MSPDP structure and rules • Techniques for effective note-taking and researching evidence • Methods for embedding sources and reasoning	• Participate in MSPDP debates following the rules and structure • Take effective notes and research credible evidence • Use points of information and rebuttals/refutations effectively

Missouri Learning Standards
Analyze two or more texts that provide conflicting information on the same topic, and identify where the texts disagree on matter of fact or interpretation (MLS.8.RI.3.B). • Conduct research to answer a question (including a self-generated question); gather relevant, credible sources, print and digital; integrate information using a standard citation system (MLS.8.WE.1.A.a). **Speak clearly, audibly and to the point, using conventions of language as appropriate to task, purpose and audience when presenting including appropriate volume, clear articulation and accurate pronunciation at an understandable pace (MLS.8.SL.2.A).** • Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed (MLS.8.SL.1.A).

DEBATE 7/8
UNIT 4: CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE

This unit introduces students to the structure and terminology of congressional debate, focusing on analyzing and proposing legislation, and practicing rebuttals/refutations, evaluations, and voting.

Unit Essential Learning Targets	
Enduring Understandings	***Essential Questions***
• Understanding the structure and terms of congressional debate is essential for effective participation. • Analyzing and proposing legislation requires careful research and reasoning.	• What are the structure and key terms of congressional debate? • How can one effectively analyze and propose legislation?
Students must know:	***Students must be able to:***
• Congressional debate structure and terminology • Steps for analyzing and proposing legislation	• Participate in congressional debates using appropriate terms and structure • Analyze and propose legislation • Defend and rebut legislative proposals

Missouri Learning Standards

Analyze two or more texts that provide conflicting information on the same topic, and identify where the texts disagree on matter of fact or interpretation (MLS.8.RI.3.B).

- Conduct research to answer a question (including a self-generated question); gather relevant, credible sources, print and digital; integrate information using a standard citation system (MLS.8.WE.1.A.a).

Delineate a speaker's argument and claims, evaluating reasoning and sufficiency of evidence in order to pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations and ideas (MLS.8.SL.1.B).

- Acknowledge new information expressed by others including those presented in diverse media and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of evidence presented (MLS.8.SL.1.C).

DEBATE 7/8
UNIT 5: LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE

This unit focuses on the Lincoln-Douglas debate format, including its structure, vocabulary, researching evidence, writing speeches, and practicing rebuttals/refutations.

Unit Essential Learning Targets	
Enduring Understandings	***Essential Questions***
• The Lincoln-Douglas debate format emphasizes values and ethical reasoning. • Effective argumentation in Lincoln-Douglas debates requires thorough research and clear writing.	• What is the structure and vocabulary of Lincoln-Douglas debates? • How does one construct and present arguments in a Lincoln-Douglas debate?
Students must know:	***Students must be able to:***
• Structure and vocabulary of Lincoln-Douglas debates • Techniques for researching evidence and writing speeches	• Participate in Lincoln-Douglas debates using appropriate structure and vocabulary • Research and write effective debate speeches • Engage in rebuttals and refutations

Missouri Learning Standards

Analyze two or more texts that provide conflicting information on the same topic, and identify where the texts disagree on matter of fact or interpretation (MLS.8.RI.3.B).

- Conduct research to answer a question (including a self-generated question); gather relevant, credible sources, print and digital; integrate information using a standard citation system (MLS.8.W.1.A.a).

Delineate a speaker's argument and claims, evaluating reasoning and sufficiency of evidence in order to pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations and ideas (MLS.8.SL.1.B).

- Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed (MLS.8.SL.1.A).

DEBATE 7/8
UNIT 6: PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE

This unit covers the Public Forum debate format, focusing on its structure, terms, researching evidence, writing speeches, and practicing rebuttals/refutations.

Unit Essential Learning Targets	
Enduring Understandings	***Essential Questions***
• The Public Forum debate format emphasizes teamwork and public engagement. • Successful Public Forum debates require effective research, speech writing, and rebuttal strategies.	• What is the structure and key terms of Public Forum debates? • How does teamwork contribute to success in Public Forum debates?
Students must know:	***Students must be able to:***
• Structure and terms of Public Forum debates • Techniques for researching evidence and writing speeches	• Participate in Public Forum debates using appropriate structure and terms • Research and write effective debate speeches • Engage in rebuttals and refutations

Missouri Learning Standards

Analyze two or more texts that provide conflicting information on the same topic, and identify where the texts disagree on matter of fact or interpretation (MLS.8.RI.3.B).

- Conduct research to answer a question (including a self-generated question); gather relevant, credible sources, print and digital; integrate information using a standard citation system (MLS.8.W.1.A.a).

Speak clearly, audibly and to the point, using conventions of language as appropriate to task, purpose and audience when presenting including appropriate volume, clear articulation and accurate pronunciation at an understandable pace (MLS.8.SL.2.A).

- Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed (MLS.8.SL.1.A).

Delineate a speaker's argument and claims, evaluating reasoning and sufficiency of evidence in order to pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations and ideas (MLS.8.SL.1.B).