



SOLUTIONS DEBATE

Objective:

To cooperatively find the best possible solution to a problem facing the world at this time and then find a way to implement it.

Premise:

It would be great to learn about all kinds of different problems and debate possible solutions to them all, but we believe that is all that people generally do, is just talk. We would like to instill the idea that it is not enough to just talk. To make a real difference, action must be taken so that the problem can be resolved. In the case of Solutions Debate, the NHSA will identify a problem for which there is a possible resolution. Then everyone that signs up to participate will work together to find the solution using skills typically learned through the debate process. Then steps will be taken, as a group, to implement that solution.

Children have been repeatedly told that “when they grow up” then they can make a difference. But the reality is that once children are “grown up” they have to face the daily struggles of making a living, paying off debt from college (if that is the way they went), providing for a family, etc.. Time to think about how to solve the worlds problems is suddenly gone. Furthermore, even when grown-ups have jobs that are designed to solve problems like “curing cancer” or finding alternate energy sources, it’s suddenly a much more complicated problem because, for example, it is far more profitable for the pharmaceutical company to develop a treatment for a disease than to find its cure and it is likewise more profitable to keep the earth addicted to fossil fuels rather than find a way to provide free energy for all. Children are however not burdened with these compromising considerations when formulating their ideas and historically they have had some of the best ones.

Problem to be Solved:

Each Years Topic Will Be Announced on October 10th.

Eligibility: All NHSA member homeschoolers over the age of 13 will be invited to participate individually or in teams of any size that they choose.

Cost: Participants will each be asked to contribute \$20 to defray the costs of running the program. Contributions will be optional but appreciated.

Procedure: NHSA Debate HQ will identify the problem for which a resolution is being sought by October 10th of each year. Anyone that is not interested in the particular problem selected or does not believe that they would enjoy working on such problem should see the section on the NHSA website under “Activities” and then “Make-a-Difference” to see how they can contribute to solving the problem of their choice.

Step 1.

Those participants, or groups of participants, that believe that they have an idea on how to solve the stipulated Debate problem, will have a period of 90 days [from October 15th to January 15th] to research, analyze, refine, find supporting evidence for and prepare their solution for presentation.

Not all participants will be required to develop a solution but it is strongly encouraged as they will find the processes of brainstorming an idea, researching its viability, contacting and seeking the advice of experts in the field, finding evidence to support their concept, debating the viability of it within their group (if applicable) and preparing a presentation to explain their solution will be an enormously rewarding and educational experience.

Step 2. All solution proposals will be delivered to NHSA Debate HQ for analysis. Every submitted plan will be posted on the NHSA website for review by all. Out of the, what could be hundreds of, possible solutions, NHSA Debate HQ will narrow the choices down to the top 10. All of the remaining proposals will however remain on-line as they may contain key components that might end up being incorporated in the final solution. Or some aspect of a proposal that was not selected may spark an idea by some other participant that may also be incorporated in the final plan.

It is important to understand that **all** participants, even those that submit solutions that are not selected to move to the next step, are very much needed to help refine and develop the proposals that do get selected. Often times even the originator of an idea cannot see all the potential pros and cons (i.e. so close “you can’t see the forest for the trees”), Every participant therefore has a significant role in the development of the end result even if their input might not be easily identifiable. The reports of each of the 10 best choices will be sent to every participant for critical review by February 1st .

Step 3. At some point in time between February 1st to March 1st each individual or team that has presented a solution, that has survived the cut, will make themselves available for a video conference where the other participants will be allowed to ask questions, make suggestions and constructively point out potential problems with each proposal. They may even refer to other proposals that were submitted, but not selected, that have components that could enhance the solution being discussed. This is where every participant gets to brainstorm what is good and bad about each of the 10 surviving proposals. It is expected that 1 of the 10 presentations will take place every 3 or 4 days (except Sundays) during the time slots specified in February. Participants can be involved in every one or just the ones they feel most passionately about. Each session would likely last 1 to 2 hours. Prior to the video conferences for the various proposals, participants (individually or as groups) will be encouraged to prepare detailed reports containing their critical research and analysis that would serve to support or oppose as many of the individual proposals as they can. These reports will also be posted on the NHSA website for review by all participants.

Step 4. Between March 1st and March 15th the presenters of the surviving proposals will modify their proposals to incorporate the best ideas presented by the other participants to enhance their proposals or they can choose to remove

their proposal from consideration due to insurmountable problems identified by the other participants. On March 15th the revised surviving proposals will be delivered to all participants and posted on the website.

- Step 5. Between March 15th and April 1st each participant will analyze the revised proposals and reports and then vote for the top 5 most viable solutions.
- Step 6. On April 2nd the results of the vote will be released and then all participants will be asked to further critically analyze each of the five remaining proposals and post any problems found with each proposal as they are discovered. Any other participants can counter-post why a particular problem isn't an issue or how it can be resolved. This will continue until April 15th .
- Step 7. From April 15th to May 1st the 5 remaining presenters will create, or obtain help to create, a multimedia presentation to accompany their written proposal. The presentations can consist of one or more members of the team giving speeches of some or all of the plan or it can be a power point presentation with audio voice-over, it can be an animation, or a combination of these and other presentation techniques as long as the full plan is carefully detailed for review by all concerned. Any other participants can offer to contribute information, video clips, images, charts, etc. to help with the creation of the multimedia presentation of their favorite solution(s).
- Between May 1st and May 10th the presentations for the top five will be posted on the NHSA website for review by all participants along with the written proposals.
- Step 8. Between May 10th and May 12th all participants will vote on the best proposal. Meanwhile a team of experts selected by NHSA Debate HQ will also review the remaining five proposals, comment on each of them and vote for their choice.
- Step 9. The solution chosen by the participants as the best possible choice will be announced on the final day of the NHSA Expo after the showing of the five multimedia presentations. Special acknowledgment will be given to those who made the most contributions during the year even if they were not originally involved in the design of the chosen proposal. Additional acknowledgment will be made of every single individual that made any contribution at all because even a bad idea from one participant can trigger a good idea by another.
- Step 10. If the NHSA determines that the chosen proposal has viable potential to help solve the problem for which it was designed then the project will be placed on one or more crowdfunding sites with the intent of raising the necessary funds to actively pursue implementation of the proposal. All of those participants who contributed to the development of the proposal will have the option of continuing to stay involved with the project in one way or another. If deemed appropriate the

NHSA will also seek additional funding in the form of grants or donations from appropriate charitable entities.

Any additional questions as to how the program will work should be directed to the NHSA Debate Coordinator at debate@NationalHomeSchoolAssociation.com. A response will be sent as quickly as possible and then the question and answer will be added to the FAQ section if it is likely to be a common question.

We would like to express our appreciation to Zoe Weil who first put forth the idea of students becoming “solutionaries”. Zoe Weil is co-founder and President of the Institute for Humane Education, an international organization, devoted to creating a peaceful, just, and sustainable world through education. Ms. Weil forwarded the term “solutionaries” in a well-known speech for the TED conference in 2011. Simply put, Zoe’s concept of solutionaries are people who transform unjust, unsustainable, and inhumane systems into ones that are peaceful and healthy for all people, animals, and the environment. Be sure to check out resources available through the Institute for Humane Education at www.humaneeducation.org/blog/category/resources/.

JOIN THE SOLUTION REVOLUTION

Instead of just talking about problems - lets solve them
Sign up to participate in this years search for a solution.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Is there anything that I should be keeping in mind as I brainstorm solutions and while preparing my proposal?

A. Be sure to test your proposed solution. Is it cost effective and practical? Is it technologically feasible? Will your solution hurt anyone, anything, animals, the environment? Will there be any long term negative ramifications to its implementation? Will the world (culturally or institutionally) accept your solution or will they fight against it? If they fight against it, is there a way to win the fight? Make sure your solution is clearly understandable and that there is no room for any aspect of it to be misinterpreted. When referencing “evidence” double check your facts - do not take any one persons word for anything no matter who they are. Is your solution creative and does it represent out-of-the-box thinking. [Keep in mind that "in-the-box" thinking hasn't resulted in a solution so far (since the problem still exists) so clearly a different approach is needed]. Does your solution solve the root causes to the problem or just treat the symptoms? Keep in mind as you prepare the proposal that, with any luck at all, the participants in this years Solutions Debate, will together be able to hammer out a genuinely workable solution that can actually be implemented to at least begin to solve the problem being discussed.

Q. In Step 2 what format should the solution presentations be in?

A. The Proposal should follow the following format:

Abstract or Summary of the Proposal - (This is a condensed version of the longer work, and it summarizes and highlights the major points of the proposal. It should include: a

statement of the problem; a concise statement as to what the proposed solution is; a brief summary list of the expected benefits of implementing the proposal; a statement as to why this proposal is the best choice over other possible solutions; the expected cost for implementation; expected source of funding to pay the costs; expected time needed to implement the solution and any closing comments you would like to make).

The proposal itself should then follow the same format as the Summary but should include: evidence to support your contention that this is the best possible proposal; any details that would help demonstrate the viability of the proposal such as profit and loss projections, lists of required materials and personnel; feasibility studies that others have run on similar proposals and any charts, graphs, illustrations, etc. that will help demonstrate that yours is the best choice. The proposal should then include its "Conclusion" which should summarize the most persuasive arguments that your proposal is the best. The end should include a bibliography of source material for the evidence used.

Q. In Step 2 what criteria will be used to eliminate all but the top 10 proposals?

A. There are no specific criteria that will be used to select the top 10 proposals except a careful analysis of the proposals and a determination as to which ones genuinely have the best chance of actually being implemented and have the best chance of actually being successful.

Q. In Step 3 what format should the reports be in that contain the critical research and analysis of each of the surviving proposals?

A. There is no format required for these reports. Any evidence that can be found in support of or against a particular proposal will be helpful to the overall goal of finding the best answer. Additionally if each participant puts each proposal through the tests described above, from their own unique perspectives, then it should be easy to find the problems with each of the proposals. Finding the problems is critically important to ultimately finding the answer because every proposal has problems and they can't be overcome or fixed if they aren't discovered. Sometimes the biggest problems are just logical common sense considerations that have been overlooked. So if doing research is not your thing then brainstorm any possible problems you can think of, write down your thoughts and send them in. Once they are posted the teams and everyone else will know what you came up with so that the respective proposals can be adjusted to fix the problems before the revised versions of the plans can be presented.

Q. Why isn't this Debate program set up as a competition?

A. Alfie Kohn very eloquently explains in his book entitled "*No Contest: A Case Against Competition*" that "competition is neither necessary nor desirable" once you really understand the facts. While certain aspects of "competition" are unavoidable in the simple act of narrowing down the possible choices to the one that is selected, it is our intent to inspire the idea of collaboration rather than competition. Collaboration generates far better results and allows all participants the opportunity to help solve the problem

together. Please take a few minutes to read this summary of Mr. Kohn's book. You will be glad you did.

Link: No Contest: A Case Against Competition by Alfie Kohn
<http://www.angelfire.com/or/sociologysshop/myths.html>

Q. Why doesn't the NHSA sponsor more customary forms of debate?

A. The NHSA believes that the "Solutions Debate" concept is the best possible program for students to get involved with that are interested in developing debating skills. In our opinion, its cooperative structure and focus toward the actual implementation of the resulting solution should be far more rewarding than other debate programs.

However, the traditional programs like the "Team Policy Debate", "Lincoln-Douglas Debate", "Parliamentary Debate" and others are all great opportunities for students to develop their public speaking skills as well as many other skills that will be used throughout the students lives. The NHSA strongly encourages anyone that is interested in these programs to find a way to participate in them. Typically public schools have debate teams that homeschoolers have the right to join. Dedicated team members that are willing to put in long hours of work finding evidence and helping develop argument briefs are normally welcomed by such teams. Consequently, the NHSA does not, at this time, offer these kinds of debate opportunities directly since they are already available elsewhere and because logistically it would be very difficult to coordinate local, state and national tournaments until the NHSA is able to find volunteers in enough areas to serve as coaches and tournament coordinators to make the program work. This is an area where the NHSA will focus continuing effort in coming years.

Q. What skills can I hope to develop or improve from participating in Solutions Debate?

A. Participants should see improvements in: research skills, critical thinking and analysis, organization, brainstorming techniques, structuring of arguments, formatting presentations, communication, questioning and finding answers using multiple information source, for starters.

Please check back from time to time as more questions and answers will be added through the year. Thank you for your interest in Solutions Debate.