DEBATE AS ENRICHMENT

WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON THE GIFTED CHILD
What is debate

- A structured argument with opponents*
- Around an evenly weighted topic
- In front of unbiased judges
- A win must be awarded
- A reason must be given

- Consider the alternatives to structured argument in the status quo
How it works

- Two sides
- One topic released to both sides simultaneously
- Sides prepare
- Sides debate while judges listen and mark
- Debate is awarded with reasons
What matters in debating

Relevant
- Logic
- Argument
- Knowledge
- Team work
- Style
- Strategy

Irrelevant
- Wealth
- School
- Accent
- Vocabulary
- Age/ Race/ Gender/ Orientation/ Ability status
- Judges’ personal beliefs about topic
Debate formats

- Policy
- Parliamentary
- Karl Popper
- Lincoln Douglas
- Oxford
- World Schools Style
Core competencies in children

- Active listening
- Comprehension
- Language
- Problem solving*
- Ability to express oneself*

*Vital for young boys as current strategies include disengagement and hostility
Core competencies in teachers

- Active listening
- Comprehension
- Problem solving
- Analysis
Adaptation in classrooms

- Most used in English/Home Language classes
- Used frequently History (essay writing)
- Used in Science for proofs
- Case-by-case basis for controversial subjects e.g. climate change carbon reform/fracking/GMOs in geography, land reform/nationalisation/trade unions in economics, creationism/cloning/space exploration in biology and the sciences
Use as an extra-curricula

- Social / Competitive
- Intraschool and interschool
- League and tournament systems
- A larger competitive structure which children bubble up into*

*With various opportunities and benefits
Use in resource constrained environments

- No kit, field or special equipment
- Desks, chairs, papers, pens and a clock/watch/stopwatch needed
- If the upskilling of teachers is prioritised, the activity remains sustainable
- A fair amount of learning between students
- Unlike many other academic or cultural activities, debate generates a lot of its own hype owing to its public nature
Research findings (USA)

- Are more likely to stay in school
- Are more likely to participate in class
- Have better test scores in English & reading
- Have better test scores than peers in general standardised tests
- Are more “college ready”
- Biggest gains from poorest households (because more resourced households provide more opportunities for children to learn)
Gifted children and inclusive education

- Moving from a medical model of provision to a social justice model of inclusion
- Gifted children not covered by White Paper / law
- SA teachers say management asks them to focus on worst off children
- Gifted children disengage at a rate of disabled children
- Class sizes further complicate matters
Debate and inclusive education

- Semi-private schools offer some insight:
  - No formal in-class difference in curricula
  - Enrichment through extra-murals
  - Middle class and especially emerging middle class parents heavily rely on schools for educational cues – teachers favour debate (year-on-year)

- Debate is an historically elite skill that in SA crosses the class divide
- Is co-ed
- Can be held in any language
- Suitable for any child that can speak/sign regardless of physical differences
Debate as enrichment for gifted learners

- Learning beyond curricula – often at university level
- Lack of predictability results in higher levels of engagement
- Makes gifted children visibly more competitive to parents
  - Becomes a factor when choosing schools
- Higher percentage of gifted children realising their potential rather than dropping out
Debate and the soft skills gap

- Sportmanship
- Conversational skills
  - The greatest of these being answering questions
- Sourcing and comparing information
Debate and the confidence gap

- The confidence gap is real
- Provides exposure to people from different walks of life
- Breaks down rigid inter-generational communication blocks
- Demystifies many things that traditionally wealthier children only have access to: world events, social media, locations like universities
- Co-educational teamwork
- Heavily attracts girls (in SA)
- Children are confident enough to disagree regularly and respectfully with peers
Strides in South Africa

- Large groundswell and still growing
- Competitive across all school-types
- Commitment to quotas

- Can you afford to be left behind?
How to start

- Teacher training 2016
- Speaker training 2016
- Start an annual SAESC tournament
- Join a league in your region in 2017 OR if no leagues then:
  - Start a league in 2017
Questions?

Thank you for your time and attention. Your speaker today was Vashthi Nepaul from Roots Enrichment.

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