

How High School Speech & Debate prepared me for Pediatrics

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Summary

What is high school speech and debate?

How it prepared me for Pediatric practice and leadership

How you can support this for your patients

How speech and debate can help you in practice

What people think Debate is

Spoiler alert:

Not the US Presidential
Debates!



Speech Events

Extemporaneous Speaking

Original Oratory

Humorous Interpretation

Dramatic Interpretation

Declamation



Debate Events

Lincoln-Douglas

Public Forum

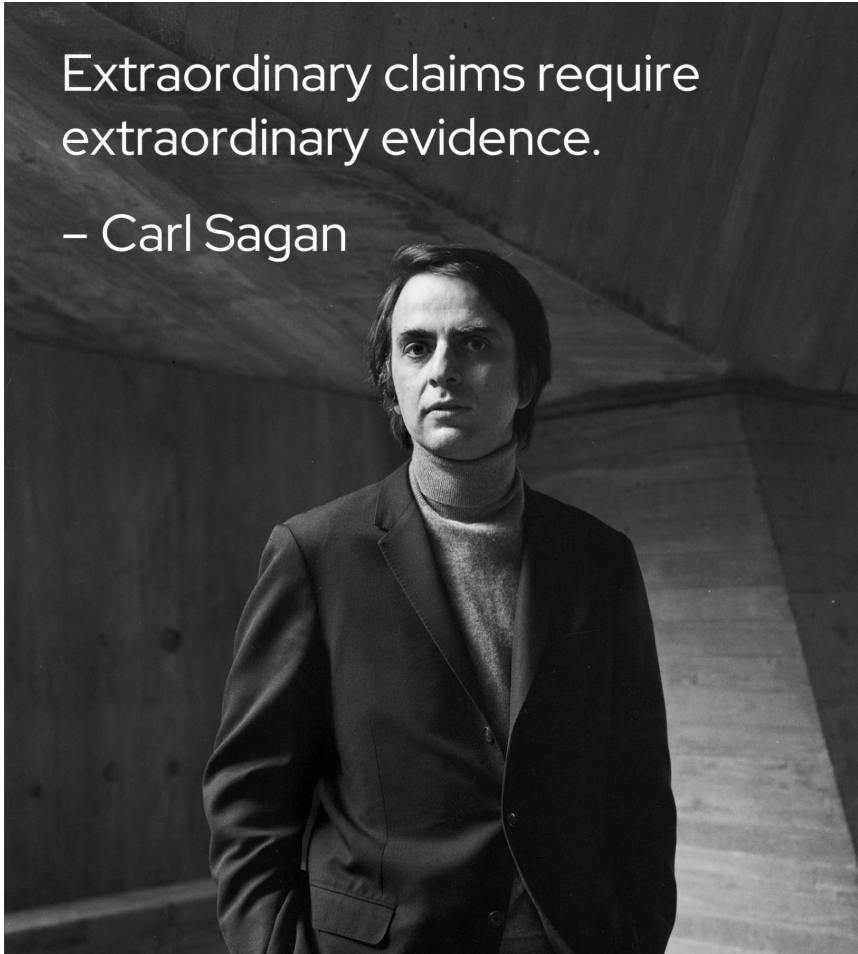
Congressional Debate

How this helps us in Medicine?

- Acknowledge the docs in the room are good public speakers (you all presented patients on rounds while exhausted)
- Organize thoughts rapidly
- Responding calmly under pressure (Cross examination)
- Comfort with conflict/ Disagreeing without being disagreeable
- What's your evidence?
- Framing the issue (vaccine hesitancy, policymakers)

Extraordinary claims require
extraordinary evidence.

– Carl Sagan



Vaccine Hesitancy

“To know thyself is the beginning of wisdom”- Socrates

- Acknowledge your frustration (and your expertise) - Watch body language

Empathy for the parents

- make clear your motivation is protecting their child

Don't accept the false premise (Paul Offit)

Strong Recommendation (what I do for my child/grandchild/niece/nephew)

The Risks of Normalizing Parental Vaccine Hesitancy

David M. Higgins, M.D., M.P.H., and Sean T. O’Leary, M.D., M.P.H.

February 8, 2024

N Engl J Med 2024; 390:485-487. DOI: 10.1056/NEJMp2313742

“A recent poll from the Pew Research Center found that most U.S. adults (88%) have robust confidence in the value of the childhood vaccine for measles, mumps, and rubella, and there has been essentially no change in recent years in the proportion of people who say that the benefits of the vaccine outweigh associated risks.¹ Our own research found similarly high levels of parents without vaccine hesitancy, with no changes occurring during the Covid-19 pandemic”

“Although the proportion of children with exemptions from state-required vaccines ticked up from 2.6% during the 2021–2022 school year to 3.0% in 2022–2023 — a small but worrisome increase — only 1% of children born in 2019 or 2020 hadn’t received any vaccines by their second birthday.”

CURRENT SITUATION: VACCINATION STATUS

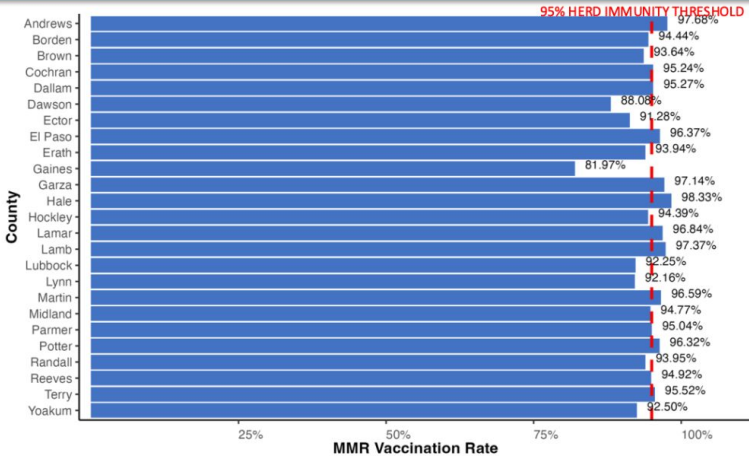
STATE	VACCINATED WITH 1 DOSE	VACCINATED WITH 2 DOSES	UNVACCINATED/ UNKNOWN	TOTAL CASES
TX	10	12	575*	597

NOTE: The TX unvaccinated/unknown category includes people with no documented doses of measles vaccine more than 14 days before symptom onset.

STATE	VACCINATED WITH AT LEAST ONE DOSE	NOT VACCINATED	UNKNOWN	TOTAL CASES
NM	6	46	11	63

STATE	VACCINATED WITH AT LEAST ONE DOSE	UNVACCINATED / UNKNOWN	TOTAL CASES
OK	0	12	12

STATE	AGE APPROPRIATELY VACCINATED	NOT AGE APPROPRIATELY VACCINATED	NOT VACCINATED	Pending Verification/ Unable to Verify	TOTAL CASES
KS	4	1	30	2	37



Among the affected counties in TX, 13 out of 25 are below a 95% vaccination rate, the recommended rate for herd immunity (SOURCE: [Annual Report on Immunization Status and CORI](#)).

BECAUSE MEASLES IS HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS, 95% OF THE POPULATION MUST BE VACCINATED TO ACHIEVE HERD IMMUNITY AND PREVENT ONGOING TRANSMISSION OF THE VIRUS.

- TX: Vaccination rates are low in most affected areas. In Gaines County, TX, vaccination rates are significantly below the threshold required for herd immunity, contributing to the virus's rapid spread.
- NM: NM reports that 94% of individuals aged 18 and under in Lea County have received at least one dose of the MMR vaccine. This is slightly below the state's overall rate of 95% for the same age group.
- OK: For the 2023–24 school year, CDC reported Oklahoma kindergartners' vaccine exemption rate rose to 5.7%. 88.3% of kindergartners received the MMR vaccine.
- KS: Vaccination rates are low in the most affected counties in KS. The statewide vaccination rate is 90%. In the counties reporting cases, vaccination rates are far below herd immunity, except for Finney and Grant Counties (98% and 99%, respectively).

SOURCES: TX MEASLES OUTBREAK, NM MEASLES OUTBREAK, OSDH, AP-3/21/2025, NYT

Frameworks Institute Report for AAP
“Reframing the Conversation about Child and Adolescent Vaccinations” 1/2023

1. Talk about the benefits of vaccination for the common good.
2. Talk about improving vaccination access as a preventive public health measure.
3. Focus on how vaccines are beneficial to children’s and adolescents’ long-term health and wellbeing.
4. Use a computer updates metaphor to explain how the immune system improves its performance through vaccination.
5. Use a literacy metaphor to explain how the immune system learns how to respond to viruses through vaccination.

<<https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/Frameworks%20Report.pdf>>

Frameworks Report continued

Vaccines as weapons leads to thinking about weapons not working, vaccine as the agent rather than the immune system “what does vaccine do to the body”

Vaccines as trainers is better! partnering with the immune system for protection

Frameworks Report - literacy - my favorite!

- “– Talk about vaccination as a process of gaining literacy to explain how the body’s immune system learns to “read” the language of a virus through vaccination.
- Talk about vaccines as “texts” that the body uses to practice learning how to read a virus.
- Use the idea of literacy to explain how the immune system remembers how to detect and react to a virus after the vaccine has left the body, just like how people remember how to read after gaining their literacy skills”



Legislative Advocacy

How to advocate for child health priorities in a challenging time

How to find common ground

Reframing the issue

School Board meetings- extemp advantage!



Insurance Company Negotiations

It's not personal, it's business

How to argue for your value- Do you have a strong argument?

How do you frame the argument ? Quality? Cost Savings? Mental Health Integration



Leadership

Making the argument for a new project

COVID vaccine- Beyfortus/nirsevimab

-Partners, nurses, admin team

Advocating for Priorities in:

Pediatric Chapter

State Medical society,

National AAP

How you can help your patients

Encourage High School Forensics- uncommon opportunity but amazing education

Judge at a tournament- restore your faith in the Future!

Support financially

Lessons from Speech and Debate can help you

Recognize you are probably good at this (presenting on rounds)

Media work

Vaccine hesitancy/ having difficult conversations

Thank you!

Q&A

Thank you to Ms. Marillee Dukes, my high school debate coach, and the Pinecrest High School Speech and Debate team and our Coaches Ben Denton, Ann Petersen, and Libby Carter

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