

# The Final Round<sup>1</sup>

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## Connecticut Debate Association

### AITE and King School

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**Resolved: Connecticut should adopt high school education reforms substantially similar to the McQuillan Initiative.**

## A Note about the Notes

I've reproduced my flow chart for the final round at Amity High School augmented by what I remember from the debate. The notes are limited by how quickly I could write and how well I heard what was said. Others may have slightly different versions. I'm sure the debaters will read them and exclaim, "That's not what I said!" I apologize for any errors, but I hope debaters will appreciate this insight: what a judge hears may not be what they say or wish they had said.

There are two versions of the notes. The one below is chronological, reproducing each speech in the order in which the arguments were made. It shows how the debate was actually presented. The second is formatted to look more like my written flow chart, with each contention "flowed" across the page as the teams argued back and forth. It's close to the way I actually take notes during the debate.

## The Final Round

The final round at Amity was between Westhill (Alex Morelli and Ben Barnett) on the Affirmative and Fairfield Warde (Ben Schwarz and Andrew Harrison) on the Negative. The debate was won by the Negative team from Fairfield Warde.

### 1) First Affirmative Constructive

- a) Introduction
- b) Statement of the Resolution
- c) Definition: "substantially similar" means reforms with the same fundamental goals and requirements.
- d) A1<sup>2</sup>: Redefining CT high school ("HS") education is critical to prepare the young
  - i) Many HS graduates are unprepared for college
    - (1) ½ credit in civics is all that is required
    - (2) McQuillan quote "many have to take remedial courses"

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<sup>2</sup> "A1" indicates the Affirmative first contention, "N2" the Negative second contention and so forth.

- (3) The McQuillan (“MI”) will see they have proper knowledge and background
  - ii) Those who don’t go to college will have better matched skills
    - (1) Businesses require more skills
    - (2) Need to train graduates for a global economy on a local level
      - (a) Algebra, foreign language, international studies are needed to excel
  - e) A2: CT HS test scores are stagnating (Quote from Taylor)
    - i) This is seen in CAPT, SAT and NAEP test results
    - ii) Even within schools, gaps between students are large
    - iii) Students are not motivated to excel and are not challenged
    - iv) The No Child Left Behind (“NCLB”) solution is only testing
  - f) A3: Since the passing of NCLB, the CT HS diploma has lost value
    - i) School funding has risen less than inflation
    - ii) NCLB has encouraged testing
      - (1) Schools have looked to spend less per student
      - (2) It doesn’t address what the test should cover
- 2) **Cross-Ex of First Affirmative**
- a) How would you reform HS courses? By requiring that they be taken, for example biology. Need a core curriculum with electives
  - b) What exactly is the MI similar to? There are required courses with standard exams for each.
  - c) NCLB focused on testing, MI requires more testing. Why will MI work if NCLB hasn’t? NCLB tests general knowledge, MI will have specific courses and tests.
- 3) **First Negative Constructive**
- a) Introduction
  - b) N1: MI won’t help students learn
    - i) MI is not a reform in education, just in evaluation
      - (1) MI is top down, when change must start at the roots
    - ii) MI requires students take existing courses in existing bad schools
  - c) N2: There are better ways to invest in education.
    - i) Better science labs, books, health care, eye care, school lunches, teacher quality
      - (1) Rather than spend \$2 million in Milford, pay teachers more to teach in rougher schools
    - ii) MI provides more bureaucracy when problem is school quality
    - iii) MI provides for no selectivity based on school, e.g., rural vs urban
    - iv) Some schools are falling apart
    - v) The root causes of poor education are the home environment and parental responsibility
  - d) A1, A2 and A3 are statements of fact, not arguments in favor of MI
    - i) Education is about more resources and better utilization
- 4) **Cross-Ex of First Negative**
- a) Can you just repeat your two contentions?
  - b) You list a lot of alternatives, but how will they narrow the achievement gap or improve test scores? The gap is related to poverty, lack of supplies, poor health care and so on.

- c) Won't more motivated students do better? MI doesn't address the heart of the problem
- d) How can students improve if they aren't taking the classes they need? We trust students to choose properly and succeed, given the resources.
- e) Do all students have the ability to choose properly? They should be allowed to choose
- f) For all courses? Within the limits of the courses high schools typically offer

**5) Second Affirmative Constructive**

- a) Intro
- b) Resolution
- c) N1: The Affirmative proposal does both things the Negative wants
  - i) MI will require more teachers and therefore smaller classes
  - ii) MI will require new equipment
  - iii) Neg says MI is just more exams
    - (1) MI will be course-specific tests, not general tests like NCLB
    - (2) Matched to course curriculum to ensure uniformity
    - (3) Similar to NY State Regents exams
- d) N2: Neg wants to spend on a plethora of programs
  - i) Why not spend on an equal basis across schools?
- e) A1: repeat
- f) A2: Aff proposes specific, not general, testing
  - i) Test will match course, so test learned material
- g) A3: It costs \$35K to support a family
  - i) Average HS grad earns 30K, average college grad \$37K
  - ii) MI goal is to increase the number who can go to college

**6) Cross-Ex of Second Affirmative**

- a) Do a standard curriculum and testing equal quality education? A specific exam matched to a specific curriculum means there will be a minimum requirement to pass
- b) Isn't it unfair to expect the same performance from students in schools with unequal resources? There is a phase in period to 2012 to remedy this.
- c) But is it fair if they lack the resources? We will give them the resources needed
- d) Won't all have to go to college to earn the higher wage? All graduates will have the qualifications to go.

**7) Second Negative Constructive**

- a) N1: the question is evaluation versus quality
  - i) Education is not the same as taking tests
  - ii) There are a series of root problems—stable families, crime, good housing and healthcare, societal ills—that affect school performance
  - iii) MI is a cosmetic, superficial, top down solution
    - (1) It says nothing about teachers, equipment, root causes
    - (2) The Aff can't add these and still be advocating a program substantially similar to MI
    - (3) MI adds testing, evaluation and bureaucracy without improving education
- b) A1, A2 and A3 all simply reflect the state of education today
  - i) They are not an argument in favor of MI

- ii) They do argue for some reform
  - iii) MI does not provide the reform needed
  - iv) The Neg says reject MI and spend money to improve schools, improve teachers and improve neighborhoods
- 8) Cross-Ex of Second Negative**
- a) Where in the packet does it say MI has to be the final solution? It's not a cure all and it's the wrong place to start
  - b) Aren't other reforms implied by MI? No
  - c) (They trade quotes defining MI) Doesn't this imply more teachers? The state doesn't hire, train and deploy teachers
  - d) How do you target school aid without tests? We agree schools are failing so it's pretty obvious
  - e) How do you know if you need to improve biology classes? See the teachers who are honored, look at CAPT tests.
- 9) First Affirmative Rebuttal**
- a) N1: the Neg assumes MI is only testing and a top down program
    - i) They agree with us that there is a problem
    - ii) MI is the first step, starting at the high school level
    - iii) MI is not just testing
      - (1) It is inherent MI will include reform of classes as it requires different classes and materials be taught
    - iv) All of the Neg reforms would require testing to determine who needs help
  - b) N2: Most of the Neg proposals are inherent in MI
    - i) You need more teachers to teach the required courses
    - ii) This will lead to smaller classes
    - iii) Students are not mature enough to choose their course
      - (1) You need something like MI or they would pick the easy courses
- 10) First Negative Rebuttal**
- a) The problem described in A1, A2 and A3 is self-evident, and they don't prove MI will fix the problem
  - b) Tests are a barometer, not a solution
  - c) Good health is not a trivial issue in education, and supplies are not a punchline
  - d) Need to start in the home, in the early school years
  - e) More people with more teachers may only leave class sizes the same
    - i) Need more teachers per student, not a band aid
  - f) College requires money. Many students have qualifications but lack resources
  - g) MI does not make classes or teaching better, does not deepen knowledge
- 11) Second Negative Rebuttal**
- a) Look at this school—books, furniture, smart boards
    - i) Certainly a better environment for learning than a crumbling school
  - b) The Neg concedes A1, A2 and A3, but they do not justify MI
  - c) College requires money, not just qualifications
  - d) The Aff wants to start with high school
    - i) Neg believes you need to start in the home, early school years
  - e) CAPT/CMT already show us the failing schools, so we have the tests we need
    - i) More tests won't improve the situation

- f) Biology? CT mandates 2 credits, while 120 schools mandate more
- g) We aren't proposing students get full choice—the state has basic requirements and many schools often exceed these
- h) We need reforms, but not MI

**12) Second Affirmative Rebuttal**

- a) A1 shows MI is the best reform,
- b) The Neg agreed with A2 and A3
- c) N1: Neg believes more tests are meaningless
  - i) To improve schools we need a barometer by class
  - ii) We focus on high schools because that is what the resolution says
- d) N2: Neg proposes same reforms that are inherent in MI
  - i) Cannot reform curriculum without more teachers, smaller classes
  - ii) Neg says MI a band aid, but we need to start somewhere
    - (1) MI tells us where to spend the money
  - iii) MI will give all the knowledge to qualify for college, with a diploma that means something.