

Public Debate Format

PART I: Introduction & opening speeches

- Moderator's introduction (10 minutes)
- First affirmative opening argument (7 minutes)
 - Panel questions (4 minutes)
- First opposition opening argument (7 minutes)
 - Panel questions (4 minutes)
- Second affirmative opening argument (7 minutes)
 - Panel questions (4 minutes)
- Second opposition opening argument (7 minutes)
 - Panel questions (4 minutes)
- Third affirmative opening argument (7 minutes)
 - Panel questions (4 minutes)
- Third opposition opening argument (7 minutes)
 - Panel questions (4 minutes)

PART II: Audience questions (30 minutes)

PART III: Closing statements

- First affirmative closing statement (3 minutes)
- First opposition closing statement (3 minutes)
- Second affirmative closing statement (3 minutes)
- Second negative closing statement (3 minutes)
- Third affirmative closing statement (3 minutes)
- Third negative closing statement (3 minutes)

If you would like to receive a full transcript of this debate, or have suggestions for future debate topics, please contact:

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Public Debate on The Future of Public Schools in Pennsylvania

*Could school vouchers improve the
quality of education in our state?*

*Brought to you by the
William Pitt Debating Union*

Tuesday, March 23, 1999, 7 p.m.
William Pitt Union Assembly Room

Affirmative

Eugene Hickok

Pennsylvania Secretary of Education

David Kirkpatrick

Senior Research Fellow, Allegheny Institute

Denise Olczak

University of Pittsburgh Undergraduate Debater

Opposition

Rev. Thomas E. Smith

Senior Pastor, Monumental Baptist Church

Melissa Butler

Pittsburgh Public Schools Teacher

Bianca Huff

University of Pittsburgh Undergraduate Debater

The William Pitt Debating Union

The William Pitt Debating Union (WPDU) is a student organization involved in a wide range of debating activities, including two-person intercollegiate policy debate, international parliamentary debate, and various forms of public debate. One of the oldest organizations of its kind in the nation, the Union is housed in the Department of Communication at the University of Pittsburgh. In the past three years, the WPDU has sponsored debates on topics such as drug control policy (March 1, 1999), “no-kill” animal shelters (November 16, 1998), nuclear weapons policy (September 21, 1998), capital punishment (December 7, 1997), sports stadium finance (October 23, 1997), same-sex marriages (October 6, 1997), Pittsburgh’s citizen police review board (March 19, 1997), university unionization (March 12, 1996), affirmative action (December 6, 1995), and terrorism policy (October 6, 1995). These debates were staged at a variety of venues in the Pittsburgh community, and featured debating by University of Pittsburgh students and invited guest advocates.

Why Vouchers?

The decision by the U.S. Supreme Court last year to let stand a Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling that affirmed the constitutionality of that state’s school vouchers program has re-ignited discussions of school vouchers in state legislatures across the country. During the last legislative season, a school vouchers bill was narrowly defeated in the Pennsylvania House, and it is likely that some variant of the same bill will be debated again this spring. Because voucher proposals seek to make fundamental alterations in the basic structure of public schooling, such proposals are clearly important topics of community concern.

The Public Debate

This event is designed to provide a forum for prominent figures in the state-wide discussion on school vouchers to present their viewpoints and test each others’ arguments in an adversarial format that mixes guest advocates and student debaters. This format, adapted slightly from previous WPDU public debates, includes substantial opening speeches by each advocate, questions from a panel, audience questions, and closing arguments.

The Participants

• Eugene Hickok, Pennsylvania Secretary of Education

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge appointed Mr. Hickok to his current post as Secretary of Education in March, 1995. Beginning in 1980, he taught political science at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA, and served as director of the college’s Clarke Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Contemporary Issues. In 1986 and 1987, Mr. Hickok served as a special assistant in the Office of Legal Counsel at the U.S. Department of Justice. In addition, he has served as an adjunct scholar at the Heritage Foundation in Washington.

• David Kirkpatrick, Senior Research Fellow, Allegheny Institute

A career public educator, Mr. Kirkpatrick was an Easton Area (PA) School District high school history teacher and social studies department chairman, and is now an independent researcher/writer. He has been a consultant or staff member in Pennsylvania to a governor, and Auditor General, the Senate Education Committee, the Senate Agricultural & Rural Affairs Committee, the State Department of

Education, and the State Board of Education. His publications include *Choice in Schooling* (Loyola University Press, 1990), and *School Choice: The Idea that will Not Die* (Blue Bird Publishing, 1997).

• Denise Olczak, University of Pittsburgh undergraduate student

A first-year undergraduate student from East Greenville, PA, Ms. Olczak has quickly distinguished herself on campus as an outstanding debater and scholar. She qualified for the elimination rounds and won several speaker awards at debate tournaments in her first semester of competition with the William Pitt Debating Union. In this event, she is making her public debating debut.

• Reverend Thomas E. Smith, Pastor, Monumental Baptist Church

In addition to his senior pastoral responsibilities at Monumental Baptist Church, Rev. Smith serves as Chairman of the Center for Family Excellence, Inc., Chairman of the Thomas Merton Center, and Chairman of the Religious Task Force on the Economy. Rev. Smith has also served as Chairman of the Hill District Ministries, Inc., and the Pittsburgh Crusade for Voters, which challenged the At-Large voting system in 1985 and helped to change that system in 1987 (resulting in the election of two African Americans to the Pittsburgh City Council). Rev. Smith earned a BA in Urban Studies from Virginia Union University in 1975, completed the requirements of a Master’s of Divinity at Virginia Union School of Theology in December 1977, and all course work on a Doctorate of Ministry in 1986.

• Melissa Butler, Pittsburgh Public Schools teacher

Currently a first grade teacher for the Pittsburgh Public Schools, Ms. Butler also works for the Pittsburgh Council on Public Education as a parent / teacher organizer. She holds a M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction and has completed course work for a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from Penn State University. She has taught previously in the Chicago Public Schools and has published several pieces on Afrocentric education, curriculum influenced by cultural studies, and the importance of schools as public spheres.

• Bianca Huff, University of Pittsburgh undergraduate student

Majoring in Communication, Ms. Huff is a senior at the University of Pittsburgh. She spent last year at an internship with the Labor Party in Britain, and is an experienced public debater for the WPDU, having participated as an advocate in the 1997 debate on the proposed citizen police review board for Pittsburgh and as a panel questioner for the 1998 debate on the 1/2 cent sales tax increase referendum.

• Gordon Mitchell, Assistant Professor of Communication, University of Pittsburgh (moderator).

Mr. Mitchell holds a Ph.D. in Communication from Northwestern and currently teaches in the Department of Communication at the University of Pittsburgh. His academic work focuses on rhetoric of science, public argument, and argumentation pedagogy. Mr. Mitchell is currently in the process of completing the final manuscript of a book-length study on the rhetoric of missile defense advocacy, and he has published previously on this topic in prominent journals such as the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* and the *Missile Defense Monitor*. As Director of the University of Pittsburgh’s William Pitt Debating Union since 1995, Mr. Mitchell has organized and moderated over 30 public debates in five states.