

*High Schoolers*  
**Pop-Up**  
*to Grow Grit and Get Great at Debate*



**Applicant Name:** Dave Stuart Jr.

**Principal Name:** Anne Kostus

**School Name:** Cedar Springs High School

**Project Name:** High Schoolers Pop-Up to Grow Grit and Get Great at Debate

**Which one strength will your intervention target?:** Grit

(word count below this point = 1997)

## **1) Description of Project**

**1.a.** My project will center around a series of 12 in-class “pop-up debates,” the final 10 of which will be filmed and uploaded as “link-only” files on Youtube for the sake of immediate student review. While I’ve already observed that these debates help students with **content retention, speaking/listening skills,** and **argumentative ability,** my hypothesis with this project is that debates can serve as a petri dish for grit as well.

I’ll begin by giving my 9th grade world history students a Daily Fact for the first three weeks of school about one of the following topics:

1. **speaking/listening,**
2. **argumentation,**
3. **content retention,**
4. **and grit.**

These Daily Facts will be aimed at a simple learning target: I want students to understand why each of these 4 things matters **strategically** and **personally.**

- E.g., speaking/listening are **strategically** important skills. The most recent NACE survey cites “the ability to verbally communicate” as a top skill employers want ([2014 Job Outlook](#)).
- At the same time, speaking/listening are important skills for our **personal** lives because they are the stuff of great dates and thriving relationships.

(I will have a complete list of Daily Facts prepared in advance of the school year; see timeline.)

It is not enough to simply say a fact at a student, however, so they will process these facts by

1. writing about them in their spiral notebooks (they’ll have a separate page to keep notes on each of the 4 concepts),
2. discussing them with a partner, and
3. sharing their thoughts with the class.

To facilitate this, I’ll use Frank Lyman’s classic Think-Pair-Share (T-P-S) strategy; this robust routine forms roughly 80% of the speaking/listening work in my classroom (the other 20% is pop-up debate).

It’s worth noting that the initial three weeks of T-P-S will also serve to **normalize public speaking** (the S mode involves me randomly calling upon students for their now-rehearsed thoughts), thus helping to overcome one of the biggest barriers to having great pop-up debates: fear.

Next, we will begin the pop-ups; my timeline allows for delays by providing for roughly 3 debates in every 4-week period. (I normally do roughly 1 debate every week; the added wiggle room increases the project’s feasibility). The sequence for each pop-up is as follows:

**Several days prior to the debate**, students are given the debatable question (examples include in draft debate list, below). I will model how to use the question as a lens for learning content (e.g., using simple organizational aids like a T-chart to make one’s notes conducive to debate prep).

**One day after that**, I will teach a mini-lesson on the coming debate’s **Target Skill**. This skill will be related to content, argumentation, or delivery (see draft list of debates below).

**On this same day**, I will also provide a brief “grit tip” aimed at helping students practice in advance of the debate. Both the Target Skill and the Grit Tip will be kept in their notebooks, each on its own page. (See draft list of debates below for samples.)

**On the day of the debate**, I will review the Target Skill with a quick mini-lesson, and students will rehearse what they might say with a partner. During the debate:

- Every student speaks 1-3 times (I will adjust the maximum as time allows or circumstance calls for).
- To speak, students simply stand up and talk.
- I assess students on the Target Skill.

**Immediately after the debate (on the same day)**, students reflect on what went well, what didn’t, and what they hope to improve for next time.

**Within 24 hours of the debate**, students add to their post-debate reflections once they’ve viewed their performance on film (this begins with Debate 3; see timeline).

The following is a draft list of the 12 debates with their corresponding skills; I will have this list completed by August (see timeline). Some debates are partially completed for illustration purposes.

**Debate 1: Was Charlemagne’s impact on world history mostly positive or mostly negative?**

*Target Skill:* Make a claim

*Grit Tip:* You can't grow grit if you don't do hard things.

- The key (unstated) objective for this debate is simple: I want kids to experience that standing up and speaking in front of their peers does not result in death; it's scary, but not impossible. Nervousness isn't cured, but it's put in its place.

### **Debate 2: Were the "Dark Ages" really that dark? Should we even use that term?**

*Target Skill:* Paraphrase someone else's claim and then either add, detract, or complicate it

*Grit Tip:* What is deliberate practice?

### **Debate 3: Were the Mongols a mostly positive or mostly negative force in world history?**

*Target Skill:* Support a claim with cited evidence

*Grit Tip:* The **power of feedback** for developing a skill.

- This mini-lesson is used to establish why we'll be filming debates and how to make the most of the footage. I will show students how to access the videos, and I will explain the 24 Hour Rule (footage and reflected upon within 24 hours).
- After this debate, I will have students complete their first round of exit tickets to provide me feedback (see timeline; this will occur after Debates 6 and 9 as well).

### **Debate 4: Which factor was most important in allowing Europe to get to the "New World" first during this era?**

*Target Skill:* Listening behaviors (note-taking, eye contact)

*Grit Tip:* You are the teacher of your **bedroom classroom**.

- This tip helps students consider how to best create an environment at home that enables them to engage in the deliberate practice they need to become the person they hope to be.

### **Debate 5: The Ming, the Mongols, the Abbasids, or modern day USA: which is the greatest empire?**

*Target Skill:* Organizational cues -- beginning, middle, end

*Grit Tip:* What does it look like to be committed to my goals, and what tools can I use to do it?

### **Debate 6: Which is a bigger deal from a world history perspective -- the Scientific Revolution or the Protestant Reformation?**

*Target Skill:* Poise

- This skill and those following are from Erik Palmer's PVLEGS acronym for speech delivery (*Well Spoken*, 2011)

*Grit Tip:* Why is failure the secret to success? Is it possible to fail too often when pursuing mastery of a skill?

[end of samples; lessons to be completed August 2015; see timeline]

#### **1.b**

Pop-up debate is **hard**. It requires mastering of content, attending to speech delivery, listening well, processing quickly, organizing one's thinking, and being brave. In other words, it will serve as a source of consistent failure for all of my students, from lowest- to highest-achieving. This failure will provide fertile soil for the Grit Tips, which will be designed for immediate application.

At the end of the project, students will see videotaped proof that sustained interest in and deliberate practice of a skillset yields improvement. They will not just read studies about grit or hear stories of its importance; they'll see its power in their own lives.

## **2) Statement of Potential Impact**

**2.a.** The following indicators will tell me that I have executed my project well:

- Student feedback that Target Skill and Grit Tip mini-lessons are helpful. (Exit tickets will provide

this data; see timeline).

- Student feedback on Debate 6 and Debate 9 exit slips that indicates they are practicing on their own in advance of the debates. This will tell me that the Grit Tips are transferring outside of my room.
- I will hear students express pride in how they are getting stronger where once they were weak.

2.b. After participating in the project, students will:

- Demonstrate increased engagement and performance in world history.
- Be more likely to develop and pursue sustained interests over time.
- Be more likely to deliberately practice skills they want to become good at.
- They will have experienced this: **When we stick with a skill for more than a few weeks and deliberately practice it, we get better.**

## 3) Feasibility of Implementation

3.a. I will have all 60 students in my world history classes participate in all activities. For students to be deemed full participants in this project, they need to have participated in 10 of the 12 debates. They will also need to have engaged in film review at least 5 times to receive adequate experience with feedback-powered deliberate practice.

3.b. N/A

3.c.

*Obstacle 1: Students may not be willing to debate due to discomfort with speaking in front of their peers.*

- I have three years' experience with scaffolding students toward successfully participating in Debate 1. The first debate is a pivotal moment, as students learn, "Hey, I **can** do this; it's nerve-wracking but I can do it." Of the 200 students I've taught in the past three years, exactly one has refused to participate. For the sake of replicability, I will need to record the "moves" I make, in addition to Daily Facts and Think-Pair-Shares, for getting students ready to participate in Debate 1.

*Obstacle 2: Arguments could become emotionally charge; feelings could get hurt.*

- The ideal pop-up debate is engaging from both intellectual and "this is just fun" standpoints; it is not uncommon for listening students to make "my brain is exploding" gestures when a peer stands up and delivers an especially poised or well-said point. Yet there are moments when debates can veer away from this ideal, especially at first when students lack the social intelligence and self-control to maintain a respectful tone even when deconstructing an opposing argument. The key to avoiding these things is to step in as the teacher and **coach through the moment**. It takes time for students to learn that arguments aren't about winning, but about getting to the bottom of a great question. (That's another Daily Fact we'll cover at the start of school.)

*Obstacle 3: A parent could refuse to sign the release form*

- In order for students to be filmed, parents will need to sign a release form. I recently had a group from Relay GSE film a pop-up debate lesson, and I did experience several parents ardently refusing to have their kids participate in the filming. The key here will be proactively working with my principal Anne Kostus to explain to resistant parents the purpose of this assignment.

## 4) Replicability

4.a. I initially wanted this project to be 12 weeks long because it would allow for greater replicability in secondary teachers who have their students for less than a full year. While I do think the project could be done within 12 weeks (I would decrease the amount of debates to 9 and conduct them weekly; the three weeks of Daily Facts would remain unchanged), I opted to take advantage of extra time I have with my students so as to maximize its feasibility.

While the pop-up debate structure is intentionally simple, doing it well would require a package of written and video training materials. I already have a beta version of this available to teachers on my blog; it's called the [Pop-Up Debate Starter Kit](#).

Toward the end of creating a quality training tool, I will be intentional about filming examples of all of this project's key teacher moves; this list will be completed prior in August. Teachers benefit from more than written instructions; they love seeing a strategy in action.

**4.b.** Pop-up debate shows promising signs of having broad appeal to secondary teachers. I have presented it to teacher groups in urban settings (Cleveland, OH; Dearborn, MI), rural settings (Hartsburg, IL; Bishop, CA; Independence, CA) and suburban settings (Turlock, CA; Lebanon, MO). Teachers in these schools from a broad array of disciplines -- art, science, English, etc. -- have eagerly implemented pop-up debate.

Considering that these teachers often tend to appreciate the Character Strengths portion of my workshops as well, I expect that I could rapidly expand the reach of this project using my teacher training experience, my writing-for-teachers experience, and my blog's audience of 35,000 visitors per month.

## Timeline for Pop-Up Debate Project, Dave Stuart Jr.

Activity	2015					2016						
	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July
Daily Facts prepared; Debates 1-12 lesson plans completed; list of key teacher moves to film for replicability sake												
Pre-project data collection												
Daily Facts and T-P-S activities												
Debates 1-3												
Initial film review mini-lesson												
Round 1 of exit tickets												
Debates 4-6												
Round 2 of exit tickets												
Debates 7-9												
Round 3 of exit tickets												
Debates 10-12												
Post-project data collection												
Second round of post-project data collection												

**Character Lab: Teacher Innovation Grant**

**Applicant Name: Dave Stuart Jr.**

**Project Name: High Schoolers Pop-Up to Grow Grit and Get Great at Debate**

<b>Item</b>		<b>Amount</b>
<b>Personnel</b>		
1		\$0.00
	<b>Category Total:</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>Equipment</b>		
1	Canon VIXIA HF R500 Digital Camcorder	\$200.00
2	Transcend 64GB High Speed 10 UHS Flash Memory Card	\$27.00
3	Tripod	\$0.00
4	Internet connection	\$0.00
5	Computer	\$0.00
6	Youtube account	\$0.00
7	Schoology account	\$0.00
	<b>Category Total:</b>	<b>\$227.00</b>
<b>Meeting Space/Venue</b>		
1	My classroom	\$0.00
	<b>Category Total:</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>Supplies/Expenses</b>		
1	Single subject spiral notebooks	\$60.00
2	Youtube clips	\$0.00
	<b>Category Total:</b>	<b>\$60.00</b>
<b>Travel</b>		
1.		\$0.00
	<b>Category Total:</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
	<b>TOTAL DIRECT</b>	<b>\$287.00</b>

# Budget Narrative

(wc = 496)

Of the resources I need, I already have most of them or they are free. For example, my classroom provides me with an internet connection and a computer on which to upload debate footage. Youtube's "link-only" video feature allows me to place videos online for students for free while also protecting their right to privacy (videos under this setting cannot be found via search). Schoology.org, which I use for classroom updates and course file access for students, is free and protects privacy as well; this site will allow me to post and store the links to debate footage for students to access both immediately and in the future.

I could implement the project without the extra cost of spiral notebooks (my school provides us with lined paper for students), but around August every year single-subject spiral notebooks go on sale in most stores for significantly less than a dollar, and I know that students will be more likely to hold onto the notebooks than they would be to hold onto single sheets of paper in a binder. It's worth the expense, and thrifty educators (including me) could likely get them for as little as 20 cents per notebook during the sale season.

The most expensive piece of my budget is the camcorder. I did not initially intend to include this (in the past I have not done this much, as I have depended on my school's sporadically accessible camcorder), but upon researching further I feel that the feedback element is essential for them to experience the deliberate practice that, when combined with grit, produces great gain.

I decided on the Canon camcorder after doing a comparison of like products on Amazon.com for cost, ease of use, storage capacity, and sound quality (visual quality is not critical). While there were cameras in the \$100 range, these consistently received reviews that conflicted with my search criteria.

While the equipment total of \$227 is certainly not chump change, it is an amount that's small enough to make successful DonorsChoose.org funding a high likelihood. I know this from experience, as I've received funding for 31 projects in the past five years (to the tune of over \$9000<sup>1</sup> worth of classroom texts and equipment). From a replicability standpoint, I already teach teachers how to be successful on Donorschoose.org (I have a guide for teachers that walks them through the process; it's freely available on my blog<sup>2</sup>). In other words, this equipment package's cost need not affect the replicability of this project.

It's worth noting that I initially considered adding a wireless lavalier mic, as the audio quality of classroom videos can be notoriously sub-par. However, I decided against it, primarily for instructional purposes. One speaking skill I'll teach within this project is Voice, which boils down to ensuring that every word is heard. Many students struggle with this at first, and a hard-to-hear filmed speaking performance will confirm to them that they need to speak louder.

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<sup>1</sup> Here is a master list of donations to my classroom acquired through Donorschoose.org projects: <http://bit.ly/15zK1zC>

<sup>2</sup> The guide is here: <http://bit.ly/1Jnzne9>

# Dave Stuart Jr.

All kids and teachers should flourish; my work is toward that.  
I teach in Michigan; I write at [TeachingtheCore.com](http://TeachingtheCore.com).

## EDUCATION:

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<b>American College of Education</b> <i>Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction</i> Capstone Project: <a href="http://www.TeachingtheCore.com">www.TeachingtheCore.com</a>	January 2013 <i>Indianapolis, IN</i>
<b>University of Michigan</b> <i>Bachelor of Arts in Education and English (History Minor)</i> Certification in History and English; additional certificate in under-resourced education.	May 2006 <i>Ann Arbor, MI</i>

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

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<b>World History, Composition, and Literature Teacher</b> <i>Cedar Springs High School: Rural/suburban setting</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Researched and trained colleagues on using character strengths for increasing student achievement.</li><li>• Created and implemented a pilot “humanities” course that combines world history and English literacies.</li><li>• Advocated for classroom needs and received over \$9,000 of classroom library books via DonorsChoose.org.</li></ul>	Aug 10—Present <i>Cedar Springs, MI</i>
<b>Leader of social studies professional learning community</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guide the social studies teachers in my building in transitioning into literacy and content teachers.</li></ul>	Aug 12—Jun 14 <i>Cedar Springs, MI</i>
<b>Language Arts &amp; Reading/Writing Workshop Teacher</b> <i>Woodlawn Middle School: Title I school under alternative governance plan</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tasked with raising remedial class test scores in Reading to meet AYP over the course of three years.</li><li>• Upheld two-year pen pal commitment between students, a Peace Corps engineer in Panama, and his village.</li><li>• Led team of teachers in producing reading lessons used school-wide as part of school improvement plan.</li></ul>	Aug 06—Jun 09 <i>Baltimore, MD</i>

## AWARDS:

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<b>Alumni Achievement Award</b> <i>from the American College of Education</i> Granted to an alumnus/ae who has shown leadership in the field of education after completing a degree.	July 2014 <i>Oak Brook, IL</i>
<b>Transatlantic Outreach Program Fellowship</b> <i>from the Goethe-Institut USA</i> Selected to travel to Germany on an all-expense-paid study tour funded by the German government.	July 2013 <i>Germany</i>
<b>Invited Commencement Speaker</b> <i>for the Class of 2013</i> Honored with the final teachable moment for the first class I taught at Cedar Springs.	May 2013 <i>Cedar Springs, MI</i>
<b>Invitational Summer Institute Fellowship</b> <i>from the Lake Michigan Writing Project</i> Intensive professional development in teaching teachers (and myself!) to teach writing.	Summer 2011 <i>Grand Rapids, MI</i>
<b>Rookie of the Year Award</b> <i>from the Teachers Association of Baltimore County</i> Received this award during my first year teaching in a school district of more than 7,000 teachers.	June 2007 <i>Baltimore, MI</i>

**Address**

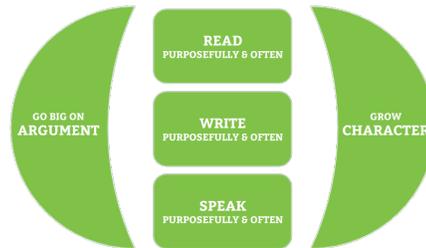
255 Settler's Pass ♦ Cedar Springs, MI 49319

**Contact Information**

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**WORKSHOP & SPEAKING EXPERIENCE:**

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- “A Non-Freaked Out Approach to Literacy Instruction Across the Content Areas”** Aug 14—Present  
Led teachers through literacy instruction framework in above graphic; keynote and workshop formats. *Various locations*
- “Building a Classroom Culture of Argument: The Key to Literacy in All Spheres”** September 2014  
Session presenter at Ohio Conference of Social Studies. *Dublin, OH*
- “What Should Professors Know about the Common Core?”** August 2014  
Invited panelist at Davenport University’s Faculty Development Conference. *Caledonia, MI*
- “Going Big on Argument in the Continuation School Setting”** August 2014  
Scheduled to lead full-day workshop for continuation school teachers. *Bishop, CA*
- “The Power of a Focused Education”** July 2014  
Acceptance speech for Alumni Achievement Award from American College of Education. *Oak Brook, IL*
- “Six Non-Freaked Out Common Core Instructional Shifts”** June 2014  
Paid professional development in large parochial district. *Louisville, MI*
- “Using a Teacher Blog to Take Charge of Your Professional Development”** March 2014  
Fire Up semi-annual conference from student teachers in West Michigan. *Allendale, MI*
- “Close Reading in the Elementary Disciplines”** October 2013  
Paid professional development for parochial elementary school, cross-disciplinary audience. *Royal Oak, MI*
- “Building a Teaching Career on Hard Work & Humility”** October 2013  
Invited keynote speaker at Fire Up conference. *Grand Rapids, MI*
- “A Non-Freaked Out Approach to the Common Core, with Coaching”** August 2013  
A three-hour workshop and series of coaching conversations given to a 9-12 cross-disciplinary audience. *Lebanon, MO*
- “A Non-Freaked Out Approach to the Common Core”** August 2013  
A three-hour workshop given to a cross-content K-12 audience. *Harrah, OK*
- “Hard Work and Humility”** May 2013  
Cedar Springs High School Commencement Speech *Cedar Springs, MI*
- “Strategies for Close Reading Just about Anything”** March 2013  
Michigan Reading Association annual conference. *Grand Rapids, MI*
- “Jedi Mind Tricks for Avoiding Burnout”** October 2012  
Fire Up semi-annual conference for student teachers in West Michigan (roughly 300 in audience). *Grand Rapids, MI*

**Address**

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**Contact Information**

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**“Tips for Becoming a High Impact First-Year Teacher”**

Fire Up semi-annual conference for student teachers in West Michigan (roughly 100 in audience).

March 2012

*Grand Rapids, MI***“Teachers as Writers”**

A 6-session series of workshops to develop teacher writing practices (roughly 30 attendees).

Winter 2012

*Cedar Springs, MI***“Grammar for Life”**

Fire Up semi-annual conference for student teachers in West Michigan (roughly 15 in audience).

October 2011

*Grand Rapids, MI***PUBLICATIONS:****Author** of *Never Finished: Continually Becoming the Teachers We Want to Be* (self-published ebook)

January 2015

- Undertook the project to exemplify grit for my students, showing them we all must do hard things.

**Author** of *A Non-Freaked Out Guide to Teaching the Common Core* (Jossey-Bass Wiley)

September 2014

- The publisher approached me to write a book on the anchor standards.
- Same publisher as Donalyn Miller (*Book Whisperer*) and David Conley (*College Knowledge*)

**Founder** and **Author** of [TeachingtheCore.com](http://TeachingtheCore.com)

May 12—Present

- Over 700,000 views in first 2.5 years; began with no audience.
- 148 posts written as of January 2015.

**Freelance Writer** for various print magazines:

Articles:

- “Technology: Tool or Trap?,” for *Youthworker Journal*
- Feature: “What Did I Do to Deserve This? Why Suffering Exists,” for *Insight*
- “How the Gospel Engages Gossips and Grippers,” for *Teachers of Vision*
- Feature: “A (Brief) Teenager’s Guide to Discerning Career Direction,” for *Insight*

February 2011

January 2011

Spring 2010

March 2010