Our analysis showed a significant positive effect for students taking the Debating U.S. History course as demonstrated by their U.S. History and Government Regents scores. Participants had both higher rates of passing the exam and higher scores, compared to their peers. While the course benefitted students at all levels, the effect was most pronounced for low-scoring students, as determined by their performance on the earlier Global History Regents exam. We also found a cumulative effect for the curriculum, with increasing success at schools implementing the course for more than one year.

To investigate any effect of the Debating U.S. History curriculum on students’ U.S. History and Government (USHG) Regents scores, we compared those who enrolled in the DUSH course with students who took a U.S. History Regents exam in the same high school in the year before the course’s introduction. Academic performance is measured by student scores on the USHG Regents exam; scores on the Global History Regents exam comprised the baseline assessment for students’ prior performance. The first part of the analysis examines overall performance, followed by a breakdown of previous Global History Regents performance.

Figure 1 shows that students enrolled in DHIST performed better than comparison students who took USHG Regents exam. Three-quarters of DHIST students passed USHG, and 46 percent passed with high scores (≥80)—nearly 10 percentage points higher than the comparison cohort. Furthermore, a higher proportion (51%) of students from continuing schools passed with high scores than students from new schools (44%). Similarly, DHIST students from continuing schools had a higher average score (76) in comparison to DHIST students from new schools (74).

Examining DHIST students’ prior Global History Regents exam scores reveals that more than one-third (36%) of participating students did not pass that exam, 31 percent passed with scores between 65 and 79, and 17 percent did not take the exam. Figure 2 presents the average USHG score by previous Global History scores. Across all Global History score bands, DHIST students achieved higher average scores. The difference in USHG performance between the two groups is most prominent among students with previous lower Global History Regents scores.
Among students who passed USHG (n=1,243), DHIST students passed at a higher rate than comparisons (Figure 3). This pattern was most pronounced among students with lower passing scores on the Global History Regents Exam. A similar trend is shown among students who passed the U.S. History Regents with high scores ($\geq 80$) (Figure 4). Further analysis showed that DHIST students performed better than all students in NYCDOE, who had an overall pass rate of 74.1.
Figure 4. Percent students who passed USHG with high scores (≥80), by Global History Regents Exam