



THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR URBAN DEBATE LEAGUES

OUR VISION AND MISSION

As the national leader of the urban debate movement, NAUDL works with its partner leagues to provide debate programming to urban middle and high school students. In 2013, NAUDL and its leagues served 7,301 urban debaters from 438 public schools in 19 cities across the United States. Seventy-six percent are from low-income families and 86% are students of color. But, they have not always been the highest achievers in their schools. Before they discovered debate, many struggled in school, with below average grades, poor attendance, or a history of disciplinary infractions. For these students, urban debate is life-changing.

NAUDL's vision is that all urban youth graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college and their careers, and to contribute to their communities. NAUDL's goal is, in the next five years, to triple the number of urban debaters.

OUR WORK

Debate is an academic sport that builds reading, research, communication and critical thinking skills. Each year high school debaters throughout the country debate a single complex policy question, or resolution, for an entire year. In 2013-14, students will debate whether the federal government should substantially increase its economic engagement toward Cuba, Mexico or Venezuela. Coached by teachers,

“Competitive debate is one of the great equalizers of educational opportunity.... To be very clear, the experience of competing on an urban debate team boosts your college readiness and your chance to succeed in life.”

– U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

debaters conduct extensive research on the resolution and develop arguments for and against it. Debaters hone their arguments in afterschool practices and compete at weekend tournaments. Two-person teams participate in a series of 75-minute debates and each team alternates sides, arguing for the resolution in one round and against it in the next.

Competitive debate has always been available to students at suburban schools, but twenty years ago it disappeared from more cash-strapped urban public schools. Urban debate programs level the playing field, giving urban students access to the same type of academically rigorous debate programs available to their suburban peers. Today, urban debate is flourishing in nineteen cities around the country.



OUR RESULTS

Through independent, peer-reviewed research, we know that urban debate works. It gives minority students from low-income families the tools they need to succeed.

Debate Improves High School Graduation Rates.

African American and Hispanic students in urban schools have little more than a fifty percent chance of graduating from high school. Urban debate keeps students in school. Like any sport, debate is exciting. It engages students, even those who are at the highest risk of dropping out of school. The results are dramatic. An independent, peer-reviewed ten-year study of the Chicago Urban Debate League found that ninety percent of the debaters graduated, compared to only seventy-five percent of similar students who did not debate. Among the highest risk students, seventy-two percent of debaters graduated, as compared with forty-three percent of non-debaters.

Debate Prepares Students for College.

Eighty-five percent of urban debaters attend college. Urban debaters are 89% more likely than non-debaters to attend a four-year college or university and 80% more likely to graduate. They enter college prepared to succeed. Research studies show that debaters are significantly more likely to test as college-ready on standardized tests in Reading, English, Math, and Science. Debaters had an average cumulative high school GPA of 3.23, compared to 2.83 for similar students who do not debate, a difference of one-half letter grade. A GPA of 3.0 is a key indicator of college readiness.

Debate Prepares Students for Twenty-first Century Careers.

To compete effectively in the global economy, twenty-first century workers will need to master four important skills, sometimes called the “4 C’s”: (1) critical thinking and problem solving; (2) communication; (3) collaboration; and (4) creativity and innovation. Urban debate teaches all of these skills. *Debaters learn to think critically.* They construct arguments, supported with evidence, and refute their opponents’ arguments, challenging the quality of their evidence and the logic of their reasoning. *Debaters learn to communicate effectively.* They must be able to communicate their arguments clearly and persuasively to judges with differing backgrounds and perspectives – teachers, parents, college students and community leaders. *Debaters learn to be creative.* They cannot win debates by borrowing arguments from newspapers and magazines. Instead, they learn to develop their own unique arguments. *Debaters learn to collaborate.* They work in teams, under the guidance of a teacher-coach, sharing ideas, arguments and evidence with their teammates.

“Competitive urban debate is almost uniquely suited to building what’s been called the “Four C’s” of 21st century skills—critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. And to that list I might add a fifth “C”—for civic awareness and engagement.”
– U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan



IMPACT OF URBAN DEBATE

Independent peer-reviewed research proves that:

- **Debate improves academic performance.** Urban debaters earn higher grades than their non-debating peers and are significantly more likely to test as college-ready in English, Reading, Math, and Science.
- **Debate improves graduation rates.** 90% of urban debaters graduate on time. Among students who are most at-risk of dropping out, 72% of urban debaters graduate, as compared to 43% of non-debaters.
- **Debate prepares students for college.** 85% of debaters attend college. Debaters are 89% more likely than non-debaters to attend a four-year college or university and 80% more likely to graduate.