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### Chicago Public School Students Prove Virtual Debates are Possible & Effective

Chicago Debates kicked off the 2020-2021 debate season with its first virtual tournament on Saturday, October 10<sup>th</sup>. Almost 100 students from 10 Chicago Public Schools gathered via Google Meet to debate on the topic of Criminal Justice Reform, specifically on whether or not *The United States federal government should enact substantial criminal justice reform in the United States in one or more of the following areas: forensic science, policing, sentencing.*

Chicago Debates has not allowed COVID-19 to stop debate programming for CPS students. When the pandemic hit, Chicago Debates quickly shifted to delivering debate virtually. As America waits to see what the virtual platform for the current presidential debates will look like, Executive Director Dr. Toinette Gunn sat down with Fox32 News on the topic. Dr. Gunn asserts that virtual debate can be done successfully. "I think they can learn a bit from our debaters here in Chicago and across the nation." The FOX32 News segment can be viewed [here](#).

Students were excited to debate in the season's first virtual tournament. *"Before the debate, I was nervous about getting into the correct rooms or navigation how to get to my rounds. I was pleasantly surprised that the organization of these virtual meets proved that my past nerves were unnecessary."* -Amundsen Debater

*"I enjoyed the debate topic and the respectfulness that was given during the debate. And when someone would talk and another person wanted to talk, one person would mute and let the other person talk."* - Chicago Military Academy Debater

*"It was my first experience debating, and I was happy we were able to adjust to the virtual environment. I enjoyed getting to talk to new people. The structure was organized...The debrief was also very helpful for strengthening our arguments."* -Hancock High School Debater

First place winners included teams from Amundsen High School (Cara C. & Calistoga F., Rookie Division), Chicago Military Academy (Felicity T. & Neamoni J., Novice Division), and Senn High School (Oyindamola O. & Amel O., Varsity Division). First place speaker awards went to Kaitlyn M. (Hancock High School, Rookie Division), Evelyn R. (Hancock High School, Novice Division), and Amel O. (Senn High School, Varsity Division). A full list of winners can be found at [Resources.ChicagoDebates.org](https://Resources.ChicagoDebates.org).

Volunteers will be needed throughout the season, offering the opportunity to virtually volunteer from anywhere in the world. The next virtual tournament is: **Friday, October 16<sup>th</sup> & Saturday, October 17<sup>th</sup>**

If interested in volunteering, contact Volunteer & Outreach Manager Lauren Hince at [lhince@chicagodebates.org](mailto:lhince@chicagodebates.org). You can also support Chicago Debates by making a donation at [ChicagoDebates.org/donate](https://ChicagoDebates.org/donate) or by texting **CHIDEBATES** to **243725**.

*About Chicago Debates: Chicago Debates is bridging the opportunity gap for Chicago Public School (CPS) students by providing them with an after-school program that supports their academic, career, and leadership success. Our mission is to advance the educational achievement, community contributions, and life success of Chicago's youth through the transformative power of academic debate. We envision a world in which Chicago youth are empowered to find their voice, succeed in college and career, and become leaders in their community. Debate may not fix all of the world's problems, but it can shape the next generation of leaders who will. We exist to ensure that includes some of Chicago's most marginalized youth. This year we aim to serve over 1700 students across 95 schools.*