



**CHICAGO
DEBATES**

Today's Debaters. Tomorrow's Leaders.

PRESS KIT

2020-2021



Chicago Debates is bridging the opportunity gap for Chicago Public School students by providing them with an after-school program that supports their academic, career, and leadership success through competitive policy debate. While debate has long been available to schools in wealthier suburban districts, Chicago Debates is creating access to this transformative activity for some of Chicago's most marginalized students.

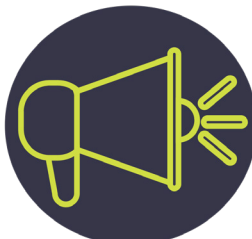
Founded in 1995 by community leaders led by Illinois Supreme Court Justice Seymour Simon, Chicago Debates was one of the first urban debate leagues established in a national movement that has seen debate expand to 21 other cities across the country. Since partnering with Chicago Public Schools in 1997, Chicago Debates has grown from five schools to nearly 100 middle and high schools - making us the largest urban policy debate league in the country.

HOW WE OPERATE



School Recruitment

We partner with principals to establish teams, identify debate coaches, and build successful programs within CPS middle and high schools.



Teacher/Coach Support

We recruit & train nearly 150 teachers to serve as debate coaches & provide them with intensive support, including in-person visits, written materials & web resources.



Research & Resources

We provide research and resources to prepare students and coaches around the year's nationally selected debate topic.



Tournaments

We coordinate and operate 35-40 debate tournaments per year, where students compete against other CPS teams and build their skills.



Summer Camp

We facilitate and offer a two-week summer debate camp, which serves 100-150 new and experienced debaters from 6th to 12th grade.



WHO WE ARE

LARGEST URBAN DEBATE LEAGUE
POLICY IN THE COUNTRY



78 schools



1172 students



In partnership with CPS since 1997

**Title I schools have at least 40% of students classified as low-income*

WHAT WE DO

Vision

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.

Competitive Policy Debate

Our middle and high school debaters compete in five to six tournaments a year around a nationally selected topic. Tournament participation requires students to conduct research, use evidence, think critically, and synthesize complex ideas to make their arguments.

Mission

Our mission is to advance the educational achievement, community contributions, and life success of Chicago's youth through the transformative power of academic debate.

Coach Support & Professional Development

We recruit, train and support nearly 150 debate coaches each year – most of them classroom teachers. Our support includes hundreds of hours of coach training, including in-person technical support visits, one-on-one communications, written materials, and web resources.

WHY WE DO IT



Improved GPA's
Increased ACT scores
Higher Grad Rates

300%
more likely
to graduate
high school



80%
more likely
to graduate
college

Build Academic, Career & Leadership Skills

Critical Thinking. Creativity.
Research. Data Synthesis. Writing.
Collaboration. Communication.

Cultivate Civic Engagement

91% said debate increased their interest in politics & social issues



Dr. Toinette Gunn
Executive Director

Expertise

Nonprofit Leadership
Education Nonprofit Work
Underserved Youth,
Families & Communities
Youth College Access & Success
Mentoring

Contact Info

Office: (312) 300-3445
Mobile: (313) 657-4876
tgunn@chicagodebates.org

Dr. Gunn joined Chicago Debates in August 2018. Previously, she served as the Vice President of Programs for Chicago Scholars, where she led the vision, research, and strategy for all programming for nearly 3000 students annually.

Having been a first-generation college student whose life today has been overwhelmingly influenced by her college education, Dr. Gunn firmly believes in the power that education holds in breaking negative intergenerational cycles. She feels honored to have served at-risk youth and their families in the Human Service field and non-profit sector for over 20 years. The majority of that time has been spent working in organizations that provide at-risk youth with quality educational opportunities, access to college, supportive services to persist through college, leadership and career readiness skill development, and mentoring through leadership roles within international organizations like Boys Hope Girls Hope of Illinois (BHGH) and Habitat for Humanity. Prior to working at BHGH, Dr. Gunn served as Executive Director for Chicago's Partnership to Educate and Advance Kids (PEAK) and Detroit Michigan's Student Mentor Partners, in providing at-risk youth with scholarships to afford them a quality private high school education, access to college, and one-on-one mentoring support.

Dr. Gunn holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Western Michigan University in Criminal Justice and Sociology, a Master of Arts degree in Counseling from Oakland University, a Ph.D. in Counseling Education from Oakland University, and is a Limited Licensed Professional Counselor with a specialization in Mental Health. She is a native Chicagoan and a proud alum of the Chicago Public School System, a Chicago Urban League & University of Chicago Booth Graduate School of Business IMPACT Fellow, a King Chavez Parks Future Faculty Fellow, the founder of the McClellan Family Foundation, and a lifetime member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.



Anthony Bolden
Director of Programs

Expertise

Team Building
Leadership
Project Management

Contact Info

Office: (312) 300-3442
Mobile: 256-617-0480
abolden@chicagodebates.org

In this role, Anthony is the CEO of all things debate; leading our program staff and ensuring our debaters and coaches have a remarkable debate experience. Anthony's leadership expertise, "This work is personal for me because I know first hand the benefit a program like Chicago Debates can have on a young person's life."

Anthony has served in a number of diverse leadership roles for institutions of higher learning, faith-based organizations, and local nonprofit organizations. Before joining Chicago Debates, he served as the Program Manager for PEAK -Partnership to Educate and Advance Kids in Chicago, IL where he helped the organization increase student enrollment, raise student academic performance, and secure critical partnerships with college access organizations across the city.

Anthony is a gifted communicator with an intense desire to inspire and develop the next generation of leaders. His experience as a choral director gives him the unique ability to recognize the gifts and limitations of others. Anthony is able to foster collaborative environments where teams maximize their gifts while at the same time helping individuals experience much-needed growth.

Anthony holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music, a Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies from Oakwood University, and a Graduate Certification in Nonprofit Management from North Park University.

Aside from his work, Anthony enjoys spending time with his wife, trying coffee from as many local coffee shops as possible, and playing golf.



FOX32 Chicago's Sally Schulze and Anthony Ponce Chat with Our Executive Director, Toinette Gunn, about Chicago Debates and what debate looks like for our student debaters. Watch [HERE](#). October 2020.

Our Executive Director, Dr. Toinette Gunn, chats with FOX32 Chicago's Tia Ewing following the final presidential debate for 2020. Watch [HERE](#). October 2020.

Our Executive Director, Dr. Toinette Gunn, on the Social Change ChangeFest Film Festival. Dr. Gunn participated in the Education segment with Patti Vasquez Bonnin. Watch [HERE](#). October 2020.

Our Executive Director, Dr. Toinette Gunn, joined this panel discussion on How to Discuss the Debate with Students in a non-partisan way, hosted by the Museum of Broadcast Communications. Watch [HERE](#). October 2020.

ABC7 Chicago Highlights Our 9th Annual Make Room for Debate. Watch [HERE](#). September 2020.

Chicago Debates on WCIU's The Jam: Watch [HERE](#). July 2020.

Sun Times: Lane Tech debater 1st ever to win back-to-back national titles, team 1st to win 3

May 1, 2019 - When Lane Tech senior Ariana Collazo clinched her second straight title at the Urban Debate National Championship, it was the first time in history that any student in the nation had accomplished that feat. [Click here to read more.](#)

Chicago Tribune: 'How excited are you guys to go see Michelle Obama?' Hundreds receive free tickets to book tour

October 26, 2018 - Among the 20,000 people gathered in the United Center to see Michelle Obama next month will be hundreds of young people receiving free admission to the former first lady's highly anticipated book tour. [Click here to read more.](#)

Press Release: The Chicago Debate Commission Moves Into A New Era With A New Name, Chicago Debates

August 20, 2018 - Today the Chicago Debate Commission revealed its new name and logo, officially relaunching the organization as Chicago Debates. This change is the result of strategic efforts and a vision to rebrand the organization to better reflect who they are and the youth they serve. [Click here to read more.](#)

Forbes: Chicago Urban Teens Publicly Debate Financial Topics That Will Shape Their Futures And Ours

May 18, 2014 - At this time of the year, most teens are debating whether they should get a summer job or where they should go once school lets out. Maybe some will debate whether to get a tattoo or a piercing, much to their parents' chagrin. [Click here to read more.](#)

WBEZ: Chicago Students Debate Affordable Care Act

December 2013 - We're spending the first part of this afternoon shift talking about the Affordable Care Act - we know there's a deadline looming - in a few minutes we have some experts on hand to answer your questions. But first, we thought we would get a different perspective on the Affordable Care Act. [Click here to listen to more.](#)

Chicago Tonight: Urban Debate National Champions

August 10, 2010 - What do you do after winning the 2010 National Urban Debate Championship? Visit the President at the White House, of course. The two winning Whitney Young High School seniors join us in our studio. [Click here to watch more.](#)

WGN News: Speed Debate: Chicago Style

May 19, 2010 - Chicago's Whitney Young Magnet High School boasts two champion debaters. Not only are these kids smart but they could out-talk even mightiest of Illinois politicians. Can your ears keep up? [Click here to watch more.](#)

Chicago Mag: Voices of Reason

March 2003 - Once an activity confined to wealthy suburban schools, debate is embraced by a new breed of inner-city competitors. [Click here to read more.](#)

Chicago Tribune: Students Make Case for Debate Program

October 8, 1997 - Sharone Mitchell, 14, isn't interested in sandbox squabbles concerning marbles or blacktop shouting matches over shoddy playground officiating. [Click here to read more.](#)



CHICAGO DEBATES

Contact Info



For general media inquiries:

Jennifer Jones

Communications & Engagement Manager

Office: (312) 300-3441

Mobile: (708)-374-1601

jjones@chicagodebates.org

Stay Connected!



@ChicagoDebates

www.chicagodebates.org

PO Box A3464

Chicago, IL 60690