



**Debate.
Grow.
Transform.
Lead.**

Governing Board

Amanda Amert
Daniel Clary
Rachel Haig
John Hammond
Tony Howard
Eli Kay-Oliphant
Femi Masha

David Nadig
Johnni Rodgers
Cindy Stuyvesant
Onur Surgit
Aneesh Sohoni
Chris Wheat
Tania White

Dr. Toinette Gunn
Executive Director

For Immediate Release:
March 8, 2021

Contact: Jennifer Jones
jjones@chicagodebates.org

Nearly 200 CPS Middle School Debaters Compete in Virtual City Championship Debate Competition

Chicago Debates wrapped its 2020-2021 middle school debate season with its City Championship Tournament this past Saturday. The virtual City Championship was the culminating event of the season, bringing together nearly 200 middle school students from roughly 20 Chicago Public Schools vying for the title of Middle School Debate Champion. In teams of two, students debated on the topic of Criminal Justice Reform: *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.*

Congratulations to this year's 1st Place Champions:

Novice Team: Skinner North Classical - Dou Lai and Carter Wong
Rookie Team: Poe Classical - Kendall Brewton & Sarah Brown
Junior Varsity Team: Skinner North Classical - Zuri Belcore & SouLynn Beneteau
Varsity Team: South Loop Elementary - Maya Agrawal and Matthew Pfeiffer

Novice Speaker: Skinner West Elementary - Allison Ciavarella
Rookie Speaker: Poe Classical - Zaire Green
Junior Varsity Speaker: Skinner North Classical - SouLynn Beneteau
Varsity Speaker: South Loop Elementary - Maya Agrawal

Chicago Debates presented Jaclyn Roman, teacher at KIPP One Academy, with this season's Coach of the Year Award, a high honor recognizing a debate coach's distinguished excellence, dedication and effectiveness. The New Coach of the Year Award was also presented to Therese O'Halloran, teacher at Hale Elementary.

Chicago Debates quickly pivoted to virtually deliver debate programming when school was shut-down last March due to COVID-19. Within the last school year, about 800 students have participated in the 43 tournaments hosted by Chicago Debates. *"We are just so delighted that we were able to bring debate to you despite it not being in person. We're very happy that we were able to figure this out,"* said Executive Director Dr. Toinette Gunn. *"Most importantly, thank you students and coaches for persisting through and sharing your love of debate with us and pushing us to innovate and figure out how to keep bringing this to you."*

Chicago Public Schools' Chief of Teaching and Learning, Dr. Sherly Chavarria, had this to say: *"Chicago Public Schools and Chicago Debates collaborated to deliver a first-of-its-kind virtual debate season. Through that, we've enabled debaters and their coaches to engage in impactful activities. Most importantly, debaters have continued to build key skills in critical thinking, research, public speaking and so much more."*

The full tournament results will be available at Resources.ChicagoDebates.org/tournaments/. Special thanks to all of the schools that participated this weekend:

Agassiz Elementary School	Hedges Elementary School	O. A. Thorp Scholastic Academy
Brooks Academic Center	Kilmer Elementary School	Poe Classical School
CICS Wrightwood Elementary School	KIPP One Academy	Skinner North Classical School
Oscar DePriest Elementary School	Lincoln Elementary School	Skinner West Elementary School
Frazier International Magnet School	Lindblom Academic Center	South Loop Elementary School
Haines Elementary School	Nathan Hale Elementary School	

You can support Chicago Debates by making a donation at 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.