# About BUDL

## Who We Are

The Baltimore Urban Debate League (BUDL) was founded in 1999 with the generous support and vision of the Open Society Institute-Baltimore. BUDL is the country's flagship urban debate league - one of over 20 other urban debate leagues throughout the nation. Over the past 18 years, the Baltimore Urban Debate League has reintroduced debate into Baltimore's public school classrooms as a strategy to engage and inspire students from our city's most under resourced schools. With the support of individuals, the local funding community, and the Baltimore City Public School System, the League has grown rapidly to meet the demands of the community. From our initial 80 pioneering students and 16 teachers in eight of the City's most challenged high schools, BUDL  expects to engage more than 700 students and 50 teachers from almost 40 elementary and middle schools across Baltimore City during the 2017-2018 school year.

## Who We Serve

While all young people interested in debate are welcome to participate, we specifically target the students who need debate the most. We seek out "unexpected" debaters, students who might be shy in class or display acts of defiance in traditional classroom settings. Additionally, for students with high rates of absenteeism, delinquency, educational disinvestment, or academic underdevelopment, debate is often a life altering endeavor, changing a young person's life direction and future goals and aspirations.

The current school year is primarily focused on serving 3rd through 8th graders in Baltimore City as we use the year to redesign our high school program in order to better serve more students in Baltimore City high schools.

## How Does it Work?

BUDL extends the reach of its small staff by training Baltimore City teachers each year as debate instructors and coaches. We provide professional development to teachers in school day curricular/classroom debate instruction, competitive debate coaching in the out-of-school hours and in civic engagement through BUDL's public debate events in the Baltimore community. Our students are heard and recognized as leaders in school buildings and in the City when they speak in front of audiences at locations like City Hall, the Nation's Capitol, the radio airwaves and in our public markets.

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# Our Programs

**BUDL changes the academic experiences for students through debate-based education during the school day and out-of-school time.**

### After-School Competitive Policy Debate Training
Coaches, selected from the ranks of teachers and trained by BUDL, hold 2- to 3-hour after-school practice sessions several days each week for participating students. Debaters learn research skills, argument building skills, and rhetoric skills from the coaches. In addition, they learn the value of teamwork, how to win and lose with grace, problem-solving skills, and respect for others with different opinions.

### Local Policy Debate Tournaments
One Saturday a month throughout the school year, elementary, middle and high school debate squads from around the City come together to compete against each other at citywide debate tournaments. Attendance averages 200 to 250 participants - students hone their skills at novice, junior varsity, or varsity levels where they compete in three back-to-back rounds of debate and are required to debate on both sides of the resolution. The day concludes with an energetic awards ceremony, full of trophies, excitement and recognition for a job well done.

### Classroom Debate
BUDL's It's Debatable! program trains and enables teachers to model quality debate-based instruction in the content classroom. Teachers work with BUDL staff to infuse argumentation into the curriculum for their social studies, science, English language arts and even math classrooms. BUDL's partnership with Baltimore City Public School System supports BUDL's curriculum development efforts and staff training time with teachers to support them in developing these interactive teaching skills and strategies.

### Summer Debate Institutes
High school and middle school students and teachers learn the format and strategy of debate and participate in team debates during special camps and workshops over the summer. These camps work to prepare students for the upcoming year of competitive debate, to enable a smooth transition from middle school debate into high school debate for 9th graders, and to educate teacher-coaches on the best practices for teaching debate.

### Public Debate Activities
Baltimore City debaters take their skills to the community to bring attention to critical local issues, to raise awareness of the power and wisdom of youth "voices," and to encourage young people to become agents of change through debate. Public debate venues have included appearances before the Baltimore City Council and the School Board, at open air markets, in schools and churches, and on National Public Radio.

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# Debate's Proven Results

## Debate Helps Students Achieve Academically

- Debate raises high school graduation rates above 98% - *DEBATE Kansas City 2002, 2003*
- Debate leads to a measurable GPA increase in middle schools - *Dr. Carol Winkler, 2005 Assessment Report*

## Debate Improves Students' Ability to Learn

- Debate improves high school students' reading skills by as much as 25% in a single year - *Collier, L.M. (2004). Argument for success: A study of debate in the urban high schools of Chicago, Kansas City, New York, St. Louis, and Seattle.*
- Debate improves critical thinking skills by 44% in one year - *Communication Education*
- Debate accesses 5 of the 6 recommended methods of active construction - *Nyquist, J.D. and Wulff, D.H. "Selected Active Learning Strategies," 1990.*

## Debate Improves Social Development

- Debate reduces disciplinary referrals for at-risk middle schoolers by 50%- *Georgia State University Reporting at the 2005 White House Conference on Helping America's Youth.*
- Debate creates civic-minded students who seek out opportunities for change - *Dr. Georgia Hall 2006, Bowne Foundation Study*
- Debate develops emotional maturity and social skills - *Communication Education*