

# Welcome Letter to Parents

Hello Parents of Chicago Debates,

We are so humbled that you have entrusted us with a portion of your child's personal and academic development. For over 20 years, Chicago Debates has helped students find their voices through the wonderful activity of 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.

Our data shows that students who participate in debate improve academically, develop communication and critical thinking skills, build their confidence, create a life-long community and expand their knowledge of the world's most complex and pressing issues.

Debate is a transformational activity. 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.

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted the world as we know it, causing many nonprofits and businesses alike to cancel events, programs, and fundraisers. Furthermore, health professionals continue to advise that this virus will likely pose a threat to us for much longer than anyone would like. However, Chicago Debates in collaboration with our exclusive partner, Chicago Public Schools, has created a fully virtual debate programming model.

This means that students will not have to wait until next year to participate in this trajectory shifting activity. Our Program Officers for School Support are already in the process of assisting our debate coaches to ensure they are prepared to offer the most engaging, online, extra-curricular experience.

In the following pages, you will find information regarding our debate calendar, tournament model, online troubleshooting guidance and other important online engagement guidelines to ensure our students are safe while participating in debate.

We look forward to supporting you and your student this school year. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Anthony Bolden, Director of Programs for Chicago Debates ([abolden@chicagodebates.org](mailto:abolden@chicagodebates.org) | 312.300.3442)

Thank you!