



Los Angeles Metropolitan Debate League
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Suits In Solidarity / LAMDL Debate Partnership Update

Overview

Motivated by a desire to ensure that African American students in LA's public schools have access to policy debate, the Suits In Solidarity (SIS- a volunteer group of African American professional men dedicated to boosting African American youth access, achievement, and empowerment) and Los Angeles Metropolitan Debate League (LAMDL- a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that promotes access to the life changing activity of competitive policy debate for students in Los Angeles area public schools) partnered to launch debate programs at 3 local public schools (Crenshaw, Dorsey, and Washington Prep) that serve predominantly African American students. The ultimate goal of this partnership is to provide the resources needed to support these teams for 5 years, until they become self-sufficient.

Policy Debate is an academic competition, where students grouped in pairs compete against other schools debating exigent topics of U.S. Policy. Debate harnesses the excitement of competitive team sports to inspire students to spend countless hours doing original research, constructing arguments, and engaging in complex policy discussions. Several peer-reviewed studies indicate that our program helps students to develop reading, research, communication and critical thinking skills, boosting their academic achievement to a statistically significant degree.

In fact, a recent study By Dr. Briana Mezuk (Virginia Commonwealth University) indicates that policy debate is uniquely impactful for young African American men. Black men who participate in policy debate are 70% more likely to graduate on time and go to college, and three times less likely to drop out, than their friends from the same schools who didn't compete.

Update

The first year goals of the partnership are 4 fold:

1. To gain the support of the administrations of each school, which are needed for the long term success of the program.
2. To identify and train teachers on each campus to serve as coaches for the debate team.
3. To recruit 10-20 students on each campus to participate on each team.
4. To provide the curriculum and expertise needed to organize weekly afterschool debate practices.

We are pleased to report that we are about halfway to our first year goal of establishing these 3 debate programs and are making good progress. Launching debate programs in under-served public schools can be a long and arduous process. Sometimes progress is slow, and obstacles can get in the way. We are however, laser focused on our mission, and excited about the potential of each of these teams. This work, providing access to the life-changing activity of policy debate, is more needed than ever. We stand at a critical moment in our nation's history where the skillset that competitive debate provides (media literacy, public speaking, logical reasoning, teamwork, and advocacy) are crucially important for our students to succeed. This work is only possible with the support of dedicated and generous donors and partners, and for that reason we are deeply thankful for your support, and humbled by the opportunity to do this important work.