



THE BAY AREA URBAN DEBATE LEAGUE
School Year 2014 Annual Report



Speak. Learn. Lead.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Bay Area Urban Debate League (BAUDL) works with San Francisco Bay Area public school districts to make competitive policy debate available to every public high school student in the Bay Area. The BAUDL believes that debate increases student academic performance, enriches and expands their college and career opportunities, and provides the intellectual and networking tools for students to thrive as active and responsible leaders in their communities. To achieve this end, BAUDL hosts debate tournaments, trains teachers to become debate coaches, organizes and instructs students at summer institutes and weekend workshops, and other events for Bay Area debaters, and coordinates the efforts of urban educators and debate experts to create and promote best practices for the recruitment, retention, and training of a next generation of leaders.

“To protect our way of life, we must provide all of our youth with a world-class education. Urban Debate Leagues take us a solid step closer to that goal.”

— **Robert B. Reich.**
Former United States
Secretary of Labor

The Bay Area Urban Debate League (BAUDL) is part of a nationwide movement affiliated with the National Speech & Debate Association, formerly known as the National Forensics League, and the National Association of Urban Debate Leagues (NAUDL) that seek to establish and maintain competitive debate teams in under-resourced public high schools.

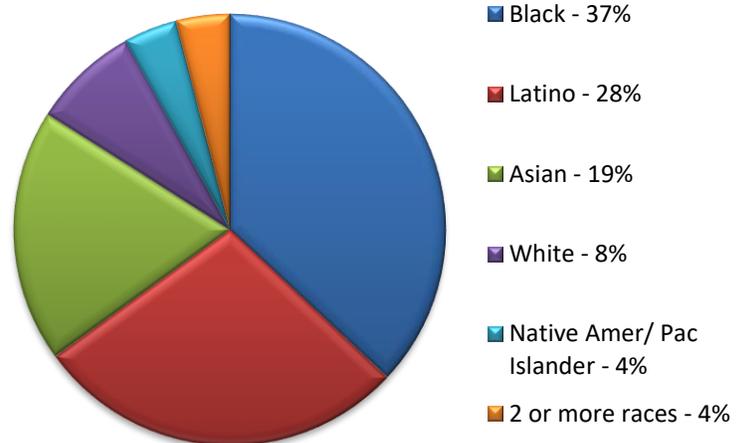
THE BAUDL COMMUNITY

The BAUDL has partnered with school districts and Title 1 high schools in San Francisco, Oakland, and Emeryville so that the young people of the Bay Area can participate in rigorous, exciting academic competition and become articulate and informed leaders in their schools and communities. According to BAUDL alum & Gates Millennium Scholar, Nick Ross, “Debate is open to all and gives you structure so you can argue and express yourself in a way that will get through to people.”

Aided by dozens of volunteers and sponsors, the league helps students from all backgrounds and all levels of academic achievement develop into trained, powerful advocates and skilled critical thinkers, ready to graduate from high school and college and influence the world. The BAUDL is privileged to have strong support from university partners, most prominently including the University of California, Berkeley and San Francisco State University (SFSU). These partnerships are institutionalized in the form of a for-credit class in which students both contribute directly to the work of the League and reflect on how to design debate programs for maximum impact on the districts and schools we serve.

The Bay Area Urban Debate League has made

Student Diversity



incredible progress in its first five years. It has done this against all odds, working in the depths of an economic recession – and with some of the most resource-strapped school districts in the nation – to support students as they work to transform their academic lives in under-supported institutional and classroom environments.

Countless amazing stories surround this organization. We work with students facing extreme adversity; some students are left behind because their voices are too loud for the large classroom environments they are placed in, and others are too quiet to stand out in the mass of students, while still others have given up on school because they were more often treated as criminals instead of intellectuals. These stories and many others are the stories of thriving BAUDL scholars.

Here are two alumni whose stories inspire:

- **Rashid Campbell.** Rashid just became the first African-American to win top speaker in the history of the National Debate Tournament. Rashid is honest about the obstacles he faced: he grew up without a father, and for much of his school career he had no steady home. Through debate he has found a way to channel this hardship into a full-ride college scholarship and an incredible string of achievements in debate.



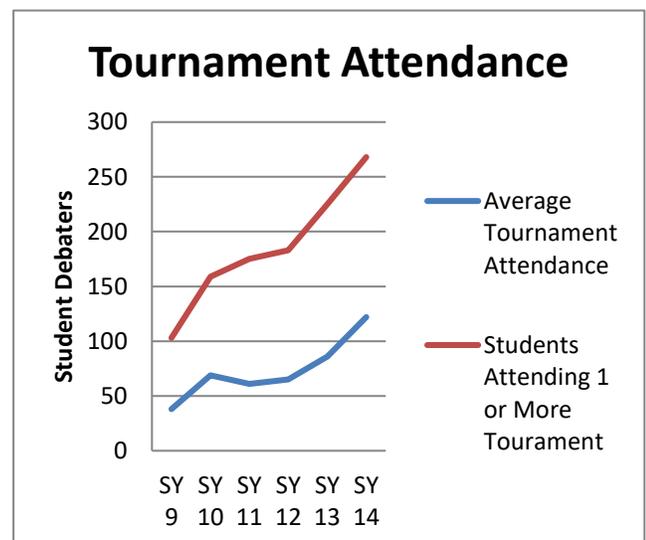
- **Elisa Saavedra.** When Elisa began debate as a sophomore, she was just trying to get through school with minimum effort and graduate. Debate reengaged her in learning and put her on the road to receive a full-ride scholarship. Elisa loves debate because it provides a venue where, as she puts it, “people hear my ideas and take me seriously” on issues like poverty and injustice. Elisa continues to debate in college where she is working towards becoming a juvenile justice attorney.

For more stories, please visit our video, [The BAUDL Cause](#).

REACHING MORE STUDENTS

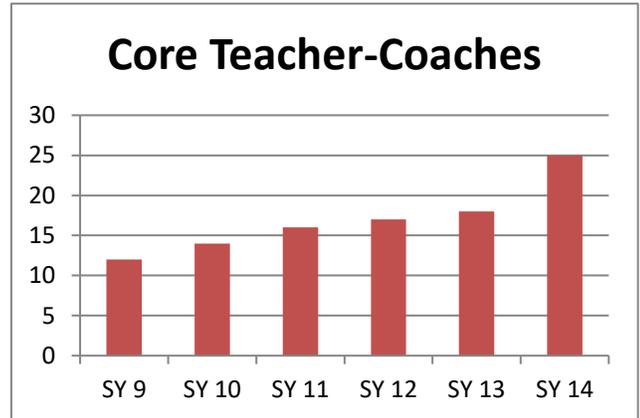
Since our first year, the number of students involved in the BAUDL has grown from 158 to more than 500. We serve 14 schools, and more schools ask to join our league all the time. Continuing this trend of growth allows us to provide tools for academic success to more students like Elisa and Rashid.

The number of students participating this school year grew, as did their engagement in tournaments. The average number of students attending a League tournament grew by 50 percent. Attending tournaments is a key step to greater academic achievement in school. The hours of preparation required to compete result in students advancements in their vocabulary, critical



thinking, reading skills, and research skills.

The number of teacher-coaches also increased this year. Experience has taught us that the strongest predictor of a transformative debate program at a school – a program that significantly alters the life trajectory of a critical mass of students – is a great debate coach. BAUDL teacher-coaches working with students incorporate *debate pedagogy*, an approach to education which reverses the typical classroom environment by putting student voice at the center of evidence-based argumentation while instructors do the listening. A community of teachers, who have devoted themselves to debate as a pedagogical method to stimulate the voice and intellect of their students, is the heart and soul of the BAUDL program. Teacher-coaches work with BAUDL debate educators and volunteers to build teams that help young people develop the skills and attitudes for responsible citizenship and college success. Using curricular materials and strategies designed in partnership with BAUDL, many of these teacher-coaches incorporate debate pedagogy into their classrooms.



BENEFITS OF URBAN DEBATE

California, the state whose gross domestic product ranks larger globally than all but 8 nations, notoriously underfunds its schools.¹ Spending on prisons continues to outpace education spending, with the state expected to spend more than \$60,000 on each inmate in the upcoming fiscal year – almost 7 times the \$9,200 it will spend on a K-12 student.² While budget-strapped schools struggle to provide sufficient and engaging academic programs, Urban Debate Leagues partner with schools and districts to fill in critical gaps. In a youth development industry in which the average cost per student served hovers around **\$1,500**, BAUDL maintains a robust program for only **\$1000** of private investment for each debater. This is because we leverage the support of school districts – along with the hard work of dozens of teachers and hundreds of volunteers – to maximize the leverage of every private dollar we receive.

But debate is more than a stopgap measure – it is a vehicle for students to share their opinions and speak out as agents of action for themselves and their communities. An electrifying mental sport and a model of education reform, debate channels the power of student voice and the thrill of competition toward rigorous self-directed learning. Debate gives young people direct experience in policy design, advocacy, and deliberation.

- 99% of BAUDL debaters say they understand the world better as a result of their time with BAUDL.
- 98% say that because of BAUDL, they are more confident in making their voice heard.

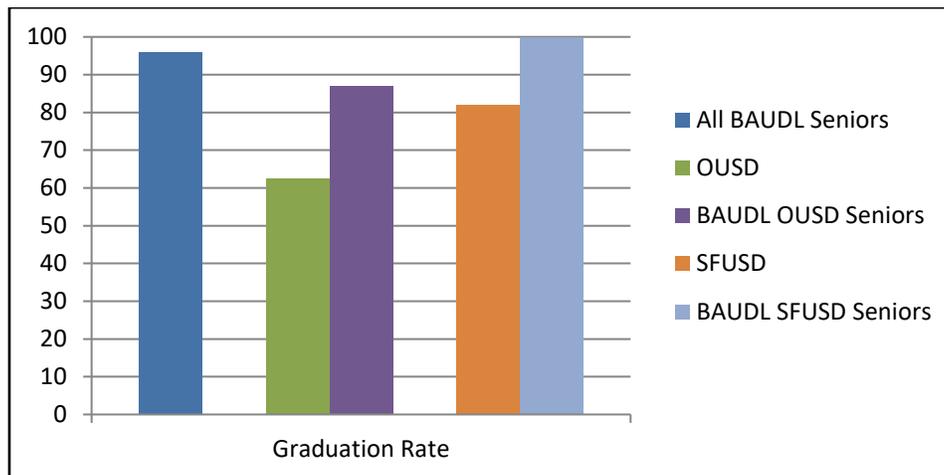
Urban Debate Leagues increase academic achievement among students:

- Literacy scores improve by 25% per year
- Grade point averages rise by more than 10%
- High school graduation rate near 100%

¹ "GDP by State." U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Retrieved January 22, 2014.

² "Schools v. prisons: Education's the way to cut prison population." *San Jose Mercury News*. Kathryn Hanson and Deborah Stipek. May 16, 2014.

With such benefits for students, it's no wonder that debate is linked to improved academic performance. Debaters are **70%** more likely to graduate from high school, **three times** less likely to drop out, and **74%** more likely to reach the ACT benchmark for Reading than non-debaters. Nationally, less than half of low-income high school seniors make it to college,³ and rates are even worse in the under-resourced public schools we serve. In contrast, **96%** of BAUDL seniors graduate high school and at least 75% will attend college.



In Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), a mere 62.6% of seniors graduated last year – more than one in every three seniors failed to reach this crucial accomplishment. Conversely, at least 87% of the BAUDL seniors attending high schools in Oakland this year will graduate, having received the extra support, academic tools, and encouragement in their debate community. Similarly, while 82% of the seniors graduated in San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) last year, every BAUDL senior in the district is on track to graduate this year. Most importantly, the program has its strongest effects for at-risk youth.⁴ That 100% graduation rate in SFUSD includes students who struggled in traditional high schools, having come to the BAUDL after landing in continuation schools. Debate is an engaging activity where students are more motivated to intensify their academic efforts than they are in a traditional high school classroom.

BAUDL offers tools for young people to equip themselves for successful futures. Besides the honing of writing and researching skills, debaters work closely with strong role models including college students, professors, lawyers, and business leaders. Connections in at universities and in the professional workforce give BAUDL youth a real picture of a world they belong in. BAUDL students see themselves as college students because they travel to and compete in college classroom. BAUDL students see themselves as attorney's, social activists, and teachers because they meet and know these people. Their future is material and right in front of them.

³ National Center for Education Statistics. 2011. *The Condition of Education 2011*. U.S. Department of Education.

⁴ This pair-matched study takes pains to show that the effects of urban debate are not about self-selection – the effects of debate hold even after accounting for prior achievement. See Anderson & Mezuk, 2012. [“Participating in a policy debate program and academic achievement among at-risk adolescents in an urban public school district: 1997–2007.” *Journal of Adolescence* 1–11.](#)

WHY DEBATE

Ask the thousands of young people who debate why they're in this activity, and most will tell you that they simply love it. The fact is that speaking freely in a forum where adults *have to listen to what you say* is an amazing feeling for the young people served by the BAUDL. The trophies they win, the friends they gain, the ideas they learn: all these make debate a golden opportunity for education and for enjoyment.



Debate helps students build the voices they need to lead. No other activity prepares students as well to build policies and critique proposals for social change, and to ground those proposals in strong research. As Diego Garcia, is the winner of the 2013 BAUDL Visionary award puts it, “being part of debate has made me into the person I am today and I cherish that. It is the thing that motivated me and challenged me academically from different perspectives about the world and for that I am grateful.”

The skills and habits young people build in debate are valuable individually but also crucial on larger scales. Without well-educated, vocal citizens, democracy simply does not work. The world needs the strong minds and voices of these young people. Debate is democracy in action.

SCHOOLS SERVED

Oakland Locations

Castlemont High
Envision Academy
Fremont High
Lionel Wilson College Prep
McClymonds High
Oakland High
Oakland Tech
Skyline High

San Francisco Locations

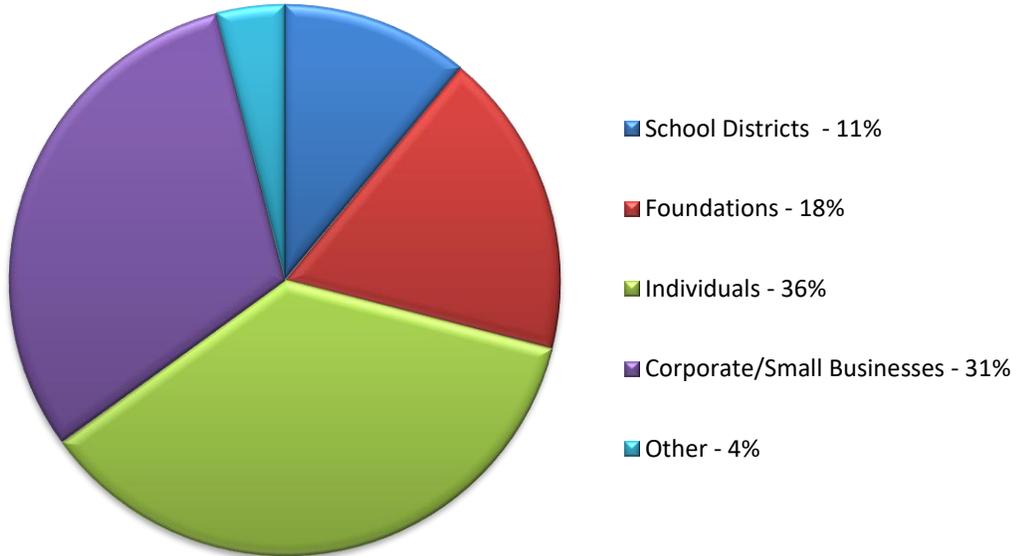
Balboa High
Downtown High
Ida B. Wells High
June Jordan School for Equity
Wallenberg High

Additional Locations

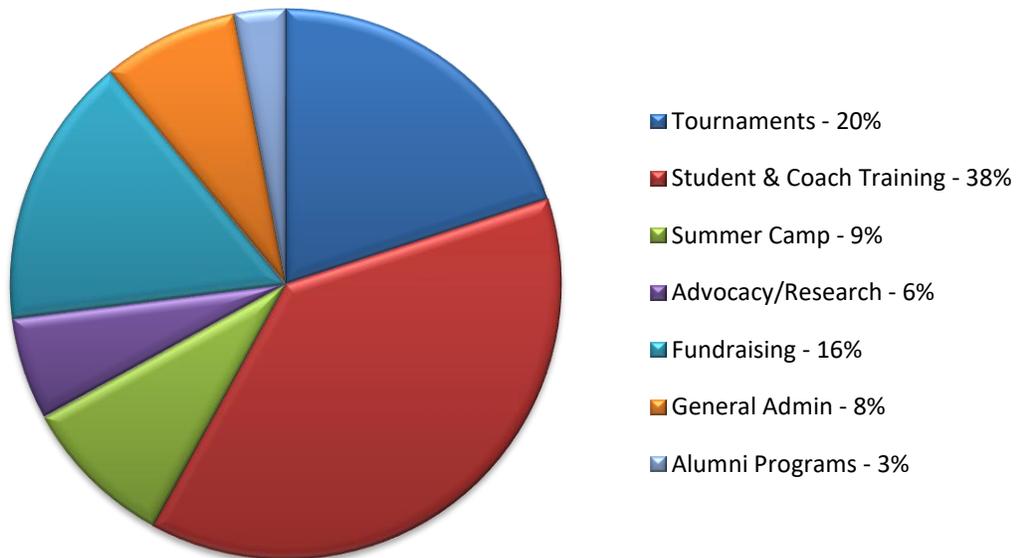
Emery Secondary School

Fiscal Year 2014 Financial Summary

Income



Expenses



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Darin Snyder, Chair
OMelveny & Myers, LLP

Jill E. Fox, Vice Chair
Rossi, Hamerslough, Reischl & Chuck

Ben Crosson, Treasurer
Wilson, Sonsini, Goodrich & Rosati

Kina Lamblin

Amber Watkins Yearwood
Trial Behavior Consulting

John Cobb

Lexy Green
College Preparatory School

Demetrius Lambrinos
Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy, LLP

Kahlil Yearwood
Dechert, LLP

Leah Castella
Burke, Williams, & Sorenson, LLP

Jeffrey D. Polsky
Fox Rothschild LLP

BAUDL STAFF

Managing Director
Toni Nielson

Program Coordinator
Orion Steele

Program Assistants (PT)
Alan Santos
Mya Whitaker
Rashid Campbell
Wyllene Turner

Communications Assistants (PT)
Joseph Flores

Program Director
Jenna Dookun

Operations Manager
Beth Gunston

Alumni Interns
Diego Garcia
Nick Ross
Dennis Guardado
Tia Lindsey
Chris Marquez