2016-2017 ANNUAL REPORT

BOSTON DEBATE LEAGUE
DEAR FRIENDS,

The strength, belief, and commitment of every individual in our Boston Debate League community enabled us to grow over the last decade into the organization we are today. You continue to fuel the work we do, and will continue to be a source of strength for BDL as we look to the future. Thanks to you, we reached over 4,600 students last year, after-school and in the classroom, and anticipate reaching over 5,000 students during the 2017-2018 school year.

We are at a key inflection point, not just in our organization, but in our society where discourse, evidence-based fact, and respect for humankind are at risk. Our work fosters profound and lasting benefits that allow students to break down national, economic, cultural, and racial boundaries. Through debate and argumentation, students learn not just how to research, but how to critically analyze and use evidence. Students don’t just memorize academic content, but understand and can apply it at a deep level. Debate offers students new tools to better understand not only the world around them, but also their own identities. Young people learn to use their voices and become advocates, not just for a claim or potential policy, but for themselves and their communities.

As the Executive Director and new Board Chair of the Boston Debate League, we thank you for believing in Boston’s students and teachers, amplifying youth voice in our community, and for supporting BDL as donors, volunteers, and partners. We are excited for the organization’s future as we look forward to our ambitious goal to offer debate teams to every middle and high school student in Boston’s public schools, while tripling the use of Evidence-Based Argumentation among teachers across the city. As we grow, we seek to use our strong belief in students and the power of language to create an inclusive and informed Boston, led by youth voice. We invite you to join us.

WITH GRATITUDE,

MIKE WASSERMAN
Executive Director

KEVIN O’LAUGHLIN
Board Chair

MISSION
To integrate argumentation and competitive debate into Boston’s public schools to develop critical thinkers ready for college, career, and engagement with the world around them.

VISION
An informed and inclusive Boston, led by youth voice.
“This activity and this league are meant to uplift youth thinking and youth voice. At the end of the day, debaters are walking away with a better understanding of what is going on in the world and a better understanding of how they can express themselves, using their voices.”

—Davian, Boston Latin Academy, Class of 2017

“In 7th grade, my English teacher told me I talked too much and I should join the debate team. And that’s how it started,” Davian says with a shrug and a quiet laugh. BDL hadn’t started our middle school division yet, so even though he was only in 7th grade at the time, Davian debated - and won - against high school juniors and seniors.

Davian moved to Boston from Jamaica 7 years ago, and he’s debated for 6 of those 7 years. He grew from the middle schooler beating high school seniors to become a captain of his debate team, mentoring younger students in debate. BDL offered him “a space to think about important issues that students my age usually wouldn’t have been thinking about.” He says his debate career served as a gateway to new mindsets and opinions that helped him learn more about the world. “Every day, I use the critical thinking and open-mindedness I learned in debate.” Davian continues to draw on those skills while studying computer science as a freshman at the Wentworth Institute of Technology.

“If you want to help youth in Boston, then advocate for debate and get students to join because it makes a difference.”

—Lorena, Brighton High School, Class of 2015

As a freshman at Bridgewater State University last year, Lorena was involved in the college’s Center for Multicultural Affairs, La Sociedad Latinx, and the 14th annual Latinx Student Leadership Conference. Lorena says debate helped her prepare for these leadership roles, but that she didn’t always do as well in school; “I went through a lot from elementary school to high school.” Her 9th grade history teacher encouraged Lorena to try debate. “She told me I was capable of doing so much with debate.” Lorena remembers. Through debate, Lorena learned to think more critically and started to believe in herself. “I went from struggling in school to being the student who had something to say, to being recognized by my teachers and other students as a debater.”

When she talks about current BDL debaters, her smile radiates and her eyes shine in excitement: “Boston youth are portrayed so negatively, and seeing students of color debating such complex topics inspires me! It’s so amazing to see the process and how smart and incredible they are. These students are making a difference right now.” She sees herself in current BDL students and wants to build her career working with young people, creating a positive cycle of support and mentoring. “I want to be part of their process of figuring this world out. Someone who has gone through it too, and can remind them that they need to do things for themselves and not only for others. To remind them that they matter.”
“EBA has become a major force in revitalizing our collective instructional practice at the Mildred Avenue... students have taken on great ownership in their learning, and teachers have phased out lectures and independent work in favor of becoming true facilitators of learning, exploration and discussion. Debate, student discourse and written argumentation have become daily tenets of instruction.”

— Andrew Rollins, Principal, Mildred Avenue K–8 School

Three years ago, when the Mildred Avenue K–8 School was put in turnaround status, Principal Andrew Rollins sought out a few key partners to help the school better serve its teachers and students moving forward. The Boston Debate League became one of those key partners. Mildred Avenue established an After-School Debate League team and signed on as an Evidence-Based Argumentation partner school. EBA provided teachers at Mildred Avenue with professional development and targeted support that helped them put student voice at the center of their classrooms, keeping students engaged and excited to learn with and from each other.

This work at the Mildred Avenue was made possible by the generosity and partnership of Jane Hyman, a passionate philanthropist who values youth and education. Jane invests in EBA at middle schools, offering young people a new way to take an active role in their education at a critical time in their development. The Mildred Avenue K–8 School is an amazing story of creating a shared vision with the right partners to ensure that all youth have the opportunity to be at the center of their own learning.

For over 25 years, The Lynch Foundation has believed in the power of public education. They were inspired by our work and our goal to grow a once volunteer-based organization into a robust nonprofit offering debate to young people across the city. The Lynch Foundation supports our Strategic Plan to offer every middle and high school student in Boston Public Schools the opportunity to debate, while teachers regularly use argumentation as a learning tool in their classes. The Foundation’s investment in BDL’s future provided the time and resources for us to develop our organizational capacity and build a solid foundation necessary to grow responsibly. Thanks to The Lynch Foundation, we are in a stronger position to turn our ambitious goals for growth and deeper impact into a reality.

We are proud to have the support of State Street Corporation, Wellington Management Company, Liberty Mutual, and John Hancock, some of the most philanthropic corporations in Boston. As long-time partners, State Street and Wellington Management Company both set the stage for our After-School Debate League to grow from serving only 100 students at 10 schools in 2010, to over 800 students at 36 schools last year. Liberty Mutual recently invested in our Debates en Español, the first Spanish-speaking policy debate division in the nation. John Hancock has sponsored debate tournaments and helped us raise funds by donating four charity bibs for the 2017 Boston Marathon.

We cannot do this work without the partnership and investment of these and other generous local corporations. The combined impact of their philanthropy makes the positive impact of debate and argumentation accessible to more students across the city. Thanks to these leading investors, and to all our supporters, young people in Boston can use their voices, develop their academic and 21st century skills, and become more engaged citizens of our shared community through debate.
OUR IMPACT

AFTER-SCHOOL DEBATE LEAGUE:

100% of coaches report that students on their debate teams improve their literacy & communication skills.

813 students debated in at least one tournament.

589 students debated in at least three tournaments and/or Junior Varsity or higher.

717 volunteers dedicated over 4,100 hours of their time to judge at BDL tournaments.

36 middle & high schools across all 5 of the neighborhoods in Boston participated in the league.

95% of seniors who debate during multiple school years graduate on time, compared to the BPS average of 71%.

Last year, the Boston Debate League served 4,655 students.

BDL has raised $2.2 million dollars.

BDL participants show significantly higher academic performance on many standard indicators of college readiness.

EVIDENCE-BASED ARGUMENTATION:

Students showed a 38% increase in argumentative writing skills.

94% of teachers agree that when they use EBA, learning is student-centered, students stay engaged, & demonstrate rigorous thought.

350 teachers received support and professional development.

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350 teachers received support and professional development.
You helped offer a platform where students can learn, grow, and thrive through debate and argumentation.

**FOUNDATION, PUBLIC, AND CORPORATE SUPPORTERS**

- **$100,000+**
  - Boston Public Schools
  - Barr Foundation
  - Wellington Management Foundation
  - State Street Foundation, Inc.
  - The Lynch Foundation
  - Boston Cradle to Career Initiative

- **$50,000 - $99,999**
  - Liberty Mutual Foundation
  - The Hestia Fund
  - The Klarman Family Foundation
  - Mabel Louise Riley Foundation
  - Shippy Foundation
  - The Harold Whitworth Pierce Charitable Trust

- **$25,000-$49,999**
  - Amelia Peabody Foundation
  - Cabot Family Charitable Trust
  - The Carl and Ruth Shapiro Family Foundation
  - Van Otterloo Family Foundation
  - Santander Bank, N.A.
  - Arthur N. Rupe Foundation
  - George H. and Jane A. Mifflin Memorial Fund

- **$10,000-$24,999**
  - John Hancock
  - Curriculum Associates, LLC
  - The Carl and Ruth Shapiro Family Foundation
  - Van Otterloo Family Foundation
  - Santander Bank, N.A., Trustee
  - Arthur N. Rupe Foundation
  - George H. and Jane A. Mifflin Memorial Fund
  - Arthur N. Rupe Foundation
  - George H. and Jane A. Mifflin Memorial Fund

- **$5,000-$9,999**
  - John Isaacson
  - Christopher Walker
  - Matthew Schnall & Jessie Steigerwald
  - Gabriel & Meredith Fried

- **$1,000-$1,999**
  - Carrie Alexander
  - Abhi Bhakta
  - Cheryl Rosenberg
  - Jennifer Herman
  - Jorg Amsler
  - Marisa Suescun
  - Robert Ullmann
  - Sandra Stonebraker
  - Steve MacLellan
  - Sunder Singhani
  - Amanda Hahnel
  - Beth Ann & Andy Ghio
  - Brescia Becker

- **$500-$999**
  - Jacqueline Delbasy
  - Mike Wasserman
  - Rosalie Suescun
  - Elizabeth Ybarra & Gerald Crean
  - James Dillon & Stone Wiske
  - Jan Cooper
  - Jay Jason

**INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS**

- **$50,000 - $100,000**
  - Robert Kraft

- **$25,000-$49,999**
  - Jane Hyman
  - Laura Sjoberg

- **$10,000-$24,999**
  - John Isaacson
  - Christopher Walker

- **$5,000-$9,999**
  - Milind Godbole
  - Kevin O’Laughlin
  - Alan Halfenger
  - Gail Zunz

- **$1,000-$1,999**
  - Matthew Schnall & Jessie Steigerwald
  - Gabriel & Meredith Fried
  - Matthew Hamilton
  - Robin Ruthazer

- **$500-$999**
  - Carrie Alexander
  - Abhi Bhakta
  - Cheryl Rosenberg
  - Jennifer Herman
  - Jorg Amsler
  - Marisa Suescun
  - Robert Ullmann
  - Sandra Stonebraker
  - Steve MacLellan
  - Sunder Singhani
  - Amanda Hahnel
  - Beth Ann & Andy Ghio
  - Brescia Becker

- **$250-$499**
  - Tristan Zucker
  - Denise Bylukk
  - Saskia Fabricant
  - Andrew Brown
  - Christian Chessman
  - Mary Dibinga
  - Christopher Lyons
  - Daniel Salera
  - Kayla Tabela
  - Kelley Shaw-Wade
  - Kelly McCoy
  - Kirk & Nancy Smith
  - Rick Bankhead
  - Robert Carroll
  - Robert McNeaney
  - Sarah Kim

- **$100-$249**
  - Carrie Alexander
  - Abhi Bhakta
  - Cheryl Rosenberg
  - Jennifer Herman
  - Jorg Amsler
  - Marisa Suescun
  - Robert Ullmann
  - Sandra Stonebraker
  - Steve MacLellan
  - Sunder Singhani
  - Amanda Hahnel
  - Beth Ann & Andy Ghio
  - Brescia Becker

- **$50-$99**
  - Matthew Schnall & Jessie Steigerwald
  - Gabriel & Meredith Fried
  - Matthew Hamilton
  - Robin Ruthazer

- **$25-$49**
  - Matthew Schnall & Jessie Steigerwald
  - Gabriel & Meredith Fried
  - Matthew Hamilton
  - Robin Ruthazer

- **$10-$24**
  - Matthew Schnall & Jessie Steigerwald
  - Gabriel & Meredith Fried
  - Matthew Hamilton
  - Robin Ruthazer

- **$5-$9**
  - Matthew Schnall & Jessie Steigerwald
  - Gabriel & Meredith Fried
  - Matthew Hamilton
  - Robin Ruthazer
FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Support & Revenue

ASSETS
Current Assets
- Cash & Cash Equivalents: $510,215
- Contributions Receivable: $479,500
- Prepaid Expense & Other Assets: $72,797
- Security Deposit: $16,000
- Total Current Assets: $1,078,512

Long Term Pledge: $86,437
Fixed Assets: $6,788
Total Other Assets: $93,225

TOTAL ASSETS: $1,171,737

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS
Total Liabilities: $81,246

Net Assets
- Temporarily Restricted Assets: $933,779
- Unrestricted Assets: $933,779
- Total Net Assets: $1,090,491

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS: $1,171,737

SUPPORT AND REVENUE
- Grants and Contributions: $2,182,012
- Program Income: $24,890
- Interest/ Misc. Income: $7,862
- In-Kind Donation: $44,710
- TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE: $2,259,474

EXPENSES
- Program Services
  - After-School Debate League: $1,187,469
  - Evidence-Based Argumentation: $462,963
  - Total Program Services: $1,650,432
- Supporting Services
  - Management and General: $422,735
  - Fundraising: $283,203
- Total Supporting Services: $750,983

TOTAL EXPENSES: $2,356,370

Change in Net Assets: $96,896
Net Assets, Beginning of the Year: $1,187,387
Net Assets, End of Year: $1,090,491

*Boston Debate League FY16 financials are highlighted above (July 1-June 30). BDL will release audited FY17 financials Dec 31, 2017.
Thank You to Our Board Members:

KEVIN O’LAUGHLIN
Board Chair; Retired, KPMG

JOHN ISAACSON
Founding Board Chair Emeritus; Isaacson, Miller

MATTHEW SCHNALL
Board Secretary; WilmerHale

ELBERT HARDEMAN
Board Treasurer; Federal Reserve Bank of Boston

CAROL BAHR
State Street Corporation

MARY DIBINGA
Boston Latin Academy

ALISON EGGERS
Seyfarth Shank, LLP

MILIND GODBOLE
Sapient Consulting

MARISA KELLY
Suffolk University

EVA MITCHELL
Boston Public Schools

STONE WISKE
Education Lecturer and Author

Thank You to Our Staff:

MIKE WASSERMAN
Executive Director

ALICIA ADAMSON
Director of Philanthropy & External Affairs

RANE BALDWIN
ASDL Program Manager

KIMBERLY BARTLETT-RA
Director of Operations

KRISTEN BONSTEIN
Director of After-School Programs

JOSE COLO
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AGOSTINHA DEPINA
Development Coordinator

RANNER FAUGAS
ASDL Program Manager

SARAH MAYPER
EBA Instructional Coach

ROGER NIX
Senior ASDL Program Manager

ALEXANDRA PAPAGNO
Volunteer Manager

KIMBERLY PERRELLA
Development Manager, Foundation Relations

MARISA SUESCUN
Director of EBA

VERNÉE WILKINSON
Director of Communication and Community Programs

KIMBERLY WILLINGHAM
EBA Instructional Coach