



About Us

The Interfaith Center of New York (ICNY), founded in 1997 as a secular educational non-profit organization, seeks to make New York City and the world safe for religious differences by increasing respect and mutual understanding among people of different faith, ethnic and cultural traditions and by fostering cooperation among religious communities and civic organizations to solve common social problems.

The International Debate Education Association (IDEA) develops, organizes and promotes debate and debate-related activities in communities throughout the world. Through debate - a powerful means of encouraging critical thinking, personal expression and tolerance for the opinions of others, IDEA provides students and teachers the opportunity to examine issues affecting their lives and their communities. To this end, IDEA creates broad and inclusive debate clubs that encourage participation by all segments of the population, including ethnic minorities, and establishes independent, national debate associations to promote, organize, and sustain debate activities in countries throughout the world.

The Open Society Youth Initiative works to identify, inspire, empower, and learn from a network of young, active citizens promoting open society ideals.



Debate in the Neighborhood



INTERFAITH
CENTER OF NEW YORK



international debate education association

Supported (in part) by a grant from the Open Society Foundations



The kind of objectivity and training the students receive in this program will help them become great community leaders, great corporate leaders, great teachers, great adults. —Ram Mohan, DiN mentor from the Hindu Temple Society of North America

DEBATE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

A Free Program helping High School Students Learn the Art of Debating

Funded by Open Society Youth Initiative

Purpose

This program takes the art of debating beyond the conventional school environment, inviting immigrant and first-generation students to participate in an enriching educational tradition. Additionally, the program fosters understanding, cooperation, and a free and lively exchange of ideas among students from a diversity of cultures, ethnicities, and religious traditions demonstrating that opposing views can be explored in ways that connect rather than divide people.

Eligibility

The Interfaith Center of New York, in partnership with the **International Debate Education Association (IDEA)**, has established **six** debate clubs at faith-based organizations and community centers for 9th to 12th grade high school students enrolled in public, parochial, or private schools. These organizations and community centers already sponsor a youth program with regular attendance of 15-20 immigrant or first-generation students. The selected students do not necessarily have previous debate experience, but are interested in learning about issues involving individual liberties and national security.

The sponsoring organizations provide volunteers who serve as “coaches” for the students. The coach does not necessarily have any debating background, but helps to energize and encourage students in learning debate, to develop positive relationships with the students’ parents and guardians, and help plan and coordinate logistics of the debating activities with the debate trainer and Interfaith Center program assistant.

Contact

Interfaith Center of New York: Kevin Childress, Project Coordinator, kevin@interfaithcenter.org or (212) 870-3547.

International Debate Education Association: Aditi Naik, Program Coordinator, anaik@idebate.org or (651) 497-4910 .



The program introduces you to amazing dynamic people who have different beliefs from you, and you learn that having different religious beliefs doesn't separate you from those people. —Ramya, DiN student

Program

Selected debaters will meet weekly outside of school with IDEA’s experienced debate trainer who will teach the students the basics of researching and preparing a case, and developing their skills in logic, reasoning, and careful weighing of evidence. Debaters will be given copies of “Privacy and Surveillance with New Technologies,” a book published by IDEA about issues related to privacy and surveillance in the U.S.. Topics for practice and tournament debates will be selected from this book.

Weekly training sessions prior to Spring Break will take place at the debater’s home youth club with his/her peers. During Spring Break (March 25-26), ICNY and IDEA will hold a two-day session where students will be assigned to mixed teams and begin preparing with their new partners to learn how to work together, begin their research, and get a chance to do some practice debate exercises in preparation for a mixed team tournament, scheduled to take place on Saturday, May 4. Prior to that event, mixed teams will continue to meet weekly, and make at least one trip to other students’ houses of worship. The final tournament will be opened to parents, community leaders and the public culminating in an award ceremony.

Benefits

Debating is truly an intellectually exciting and inspiring activity. Studies have shown marked improvement in a wide variety of academic skills including better written and oral communications and reading comprehension. Debaters learn to think rigorously and critically which promotes problem solving and innovative thinking, while helping students build links between words and ideas that make concepts more meaningful. Beyond school, engaging youth in debating helps to foster the next generation of civic leaders and build democracy by supporting lively discussion and exchange of ideas. Through IDEA, students will become connected to a global network of debating clubs and opportunities to participate in international youth forums.

Videos that feature students and mentors from this program:

<http://odysseynetworks.org/video/religion-without-borders>
<https://www.youtube.com/user/DebateNeighborhood>