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EMPOWERING MINDS, TRANSFORMING FUTURES: UMOJA DEBATE LEAGUE'S DYNAMIC AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM TAKES CENTER STAGE IN DETROIT



In the heart of Detroit, Michigan, Umoja Debate League, a dynamic youth-focused non-profit organization, is making a huge impact in the education sector. Since our launch in 2021, we've been on a mission to empower young minds through the transformative skills of debate. With the After-School Program being one of our main programs, Umoja Debate League is committed to instilling critical thinking, encouraging self expression, promoting conflict resolution skills, and enhancing literacy. This program has made a huge impact in the Detroit community.

Instilling a Passion for Debate

Our journey began in 2022 at John R. King Academic and Performing Arts Academy. Umoja Debate League's After-School Program led by Founder and Executive Director, Jerjuan Howard as the head coach, offered students an introduction to debate. This pilot program has played a huge role in providing the essential skills of debate through disguised learning.

Expanding Opportunities

In the 2022-2023 school year, our After-School Program expanded to four Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) middle schools. John R. King Academic and Performing Arts Academy was joined by Paul Robeson Malcolm X Academy, Catherine C. Blackwell Institute, and Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary-Middle School. This expansion broadened our reach, connecting with a wider range of students and instilling a deeper love for debate.

During that school year, we were also able to hire seven Speech and Debate coaches, which marked a pivotal moment for our organization. Their expertise and dedication played a crucial role in guiding students to success, seen throughout the after-school program and during the debate competitions.

The first competition at the Detroit Historical Museum on April 8, 2023, was a showcase of our students' skills, with the second competition at the Sheffield Bridge Center Library reaffirming the positive impact of our after-school program.

A Promising 2023-2024 School Year

In the 2023-2024 school year, Umoja Debate League aims to establish our program in 20 schools. This expansion includes DPSCD middle and high schools, University Prep Schools, Harper Woods School District middle and high schools, and the Boys and Girls Club. This expansion will make a larger impact on our youth participants, enhancing their confidence, communication, conflict resolution and literacy skills.

“Using debate as a radical framework for societal change, Umoja Debate League operates at the intersection of speech, debate, and youth agency to cultivate civically engaged servant leaders. Our students will use their sharpened critical thinking, articulation, and conflict resolution skills to ignite total community transformation.” said Taylor James, Operations Manager at Umoja Debate League

The Impact

Our After-School Program has grown rapidly and has made a positive impact, equipping students with essential skills. In a city known for resilience, Umoja Debate League is proving that with the right opportunities and support, the youth of Detroit can achieve greatness.

The After School Program is a testament to how a vision can transform the lives of the youth, expanding our reach, and making a real difference in the community. The Umoja Debate League is proving that debate is not just an academic pursuit but a powerful tool for personal and societal change, preparing tomorrow's leaders, one debate at a time.

About Umoja Debate League

Umoja Debate League is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. We are a youth debate league based in Detroit, MI. By using debate as our vehicle, we provide students with the opportunity for self expression, critical thinking skills, and conflict resolution skills.

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