

2021-2022



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LEARN TODAY. LEAD TOMORROW.

A NOTE FROM OUR FOUNDER AND CEO

I hope that as you read this, you are healthy, happy and able to reflect with pride on the past year. I am certainly fortunate to be able to do so, with 2021-22 full of highlights, only a few of which I'll touch on below.

Throughout 2021-22, Debate Mate has continued to go from strength to strength. Our incredible team of Programme Directors, supported by hundreds of stellar university mentors across the world, have navigated the challenges presented by Covid-19 brilliantly.

We have been able to grow the number of students that we reach - launching a pilot Core Programme in Cardiff, while simultaneously designing and delivering brand new, innovative courses for students enrolled in our Virtual Clubs. Debate Mate has well and truly moved beyond debating, and is now providing designated courses on everything from Shakespeare to Space, to Exploring Inventions and Oxbridge applications.

As part of our innovative 'Boardroom to Classroom' Programme, 2021-22 saw us engage even more closely with businesses to provide students and employees alike with a unique collaborative skills-building experience. We were fortunate to partner with world-class organisations including Deloitte, Salesforce, The Gap Partnership, PwC, Standard Chartered Bank, and Bank of America, and this impressive roster of partners is set to increase next year.

Our focus this year has been on ensuring that all students, wherever they may be, have been able to continue taking advantage of the opportunities on offer to them. This work will accelerate next year as the world (hopefully) reopens fully and we're able to do even more in the classroom, boardroom and Zoom room.

I am, as ever, grateful to our sponsors for their ongoing support, and the teachers and school leaders that welcome us to work with their fantastic students. But most of all, I am thankful to the students themselves who, as we look back on our 14th year, continue to inspire me, and remind me daily that I genuinely have the best job in the world.

Here's to the year just gone, and to many more ahead!

Margaret McCabe

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

The United Kingdom has one of the **worst rates of social mobility** in the Western world, performing poorly on every critical measurement of social mobility (The Social Mobility Commission, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2020).

Socioeconomic **inequalities emerge from birth and often widen during a child's time in education** - impacting children's ability to develop and learn, and therefore achieve academically and develop soft skills, as well as impacting young people's aspirations as they grow up (Masten and Cicchetti, 2010).

These factors in turn influence young people's access to higher education, quality apprenticeships or skilled work upon leaving school - directly impacting labour market trends and the UK's overall rate of social mobility. In the context of already declining social mobility, **disadvantaged young people have been hit the hardest by Covid-19, with repercussions that threaten to impact them for many years to come** (Ikeda, 2022).



**4.3
million
children**

are growing up in poverty
in the United Kingdom

(The Social Mobility Commission, 2021)

At secondary school level, during the pandemic, **learning losses** in schools that have a high proportion of pupils from **disadvantaged backgrounds** were around **50% higher** than those schools with very few pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds

(Renaissance Learning and Education Policy, 2021)

THE IMPACT OF DISADVANTAGE

Covid-19 has widened the **attainment gap**.
Disadvantaged Year 6 pupils were around
seven months behind their peers in
autumn 2020, compared to five months previously
(Blainey & Hannay, 2021)



Children from **disadvantaged households** are much less likely than their peers to take part in extracurricular activities, with **academic activities** the **least likely** of activities to be offered to students from disadvantaged backgrounds

Key barriers to students' participation in activities' are their **high cost, low confidence**, and difficulties in **access**

(The Social Mobility Commission, 2019)

By the age of 16, disadvantaged pupils are over **18 months behind** their peers in key educational attainment measurements

(Hutchinson et al., 2019)



26%

of students in receipt of Free School Meals reach **higher education** by the age of 19, compared to 47% of their more advantaged peers

(Department for Education, 2021)



Pupils in receipt of Free School Meals are **23% less likely** to be in sustained employment by the age of 27, compared to their peers who were not eligible for FSM
(Department for Education, 2018)

Gaps in key 21st Century soft skills are as widely reported by employers as the gaps in job-specific and technical skills

(The Social Mobility Commission, 2019)

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

Founded in 2007, Debate Mate tackles social mobility by delivering after-school debate clubs in schools in areas of high deprivation, using a **highly effective peer-to-peer mentoring** model. Our **debating programmes**, delivered by inspirational university student mentors from the UK's top universities, focus on **building key transferable skills** and **raising students' aspirations** to empower them to be successful both academically and in the professional world.

Debating has been shown to be effective in both increasing academic and learning attainment, and improving a **range of higher-order thinking skills and non-cognitive abilities** such as confidence, teamwork and leadership (Akerman and Neale, 2011; APPG, 2021). Using debating methodology, our programmes **address the widening skills gap** between education and employment while **raising aspirations** and helping students to **make informed post-18 choices**.

Key Transferable 21st Century Skills

Critical and Creative Thinking

Teamwork
Leadership

Communication Skills
Core Confidence

At Debate Mate we believe **every student** should have the opportunity to debate and **should leave school with the aspiration, core confidence and skill set necessary to succeed in whatever they wish to do**. We have developed a variety of different programmes to accomplish this mission, working with students from the age of eight to eighteen at **all levels of educational attainment and engagement**. From supporting students who are disillusioned with mainstream education to supporting students to be a part of, and even captain, the England World Schools debate team - **we show that debating is for everyone!**

DEBATE MATE IN NUMBERS

4,400 students

200
primary & secondary
schools

14
cities and regions

6
programmes



THE CORE PROGRAMME

The Core Programme is a 17-week debating programme comprising 14 teaching weeks and three weeks preparing for, and participating in, national debating competitions - the largest of their kind in the UK.

All elements of the programme have been designed with four central goals in mind:

1. To accelerate attainment in speaking and listening
2. To strengthen emotional capacity by building confidence, self-esteem, and resilience
3. To develop key employability skills such as leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, and self-management
4. To heighten aspirations towards both tertiary education and meaningful employment.

THE LAUNCH EVENT

The Core Programme starts with students and teachers being invited to watch a show debate featuring world champion debaters and star Debate Mate students. Through seeing a range of role models on stage, this event breaks down any previous stereotypes students might have about debating.



THE AFTER-SCHOOL CLUBS

Debate Mate recruits and trains university students from top UK universities to deliver our 17-week programme. We place over 500 university student mentors in schools across the UK to deliver our unique debating curriculum to students in years five to ten.

Our curriculum focuses on giving students the skills to express themselves clearly, concisely and persuasively, and teaches them to research and argue for statements they might not necessarily agree with. This teaches the vital skill of empathy, which allows students to consider issues from multiple viewpoints.

Students are also taught how to deliver points stylistically, structure arguments in a convincing manner, and to debate strategically.

NATIONAL COMPETITIONS

Debate Mate runs two national competitions each year for all Debate Mate students to take part in. The **Urban Debate League** - an after-school competition where students compete against schools in their local area, and the full-day **Debate Mate Cup** - where across the regions, students debate against each other at inspiring university venues. Due to restrictions in school trips, we ran our first UDL round online and continued to offer virtual competitions throughout the year.



NATIONAL FINALS

The schools that finish at the top of our national Urban Debate League leaderboard, or win their regional round of the Debate Mate Cup, are invited to our national finals, held at prestigious venues across the UK such as the Houses of Parliament and Christ Church College, Oxford.



DELOITTE BETTER FUTURES MONTH

This year, Debate Mate took part in the Deloitte Better Futures Month 2022 for the second consecutive year. The programme saw **over 300 Deloitte employees take part and collaborate with 341 pitch teams, 138 schools and 2570 students across the UK** on our Core programme.

Students developed and pitched innovative ideas focusing on **technology for good, climate change, and their local community** to a selection of Deloitte volunteers. They were given valuable feedback from the volunteers as well as an insight into pathways to the professional world and Deloitte.

We held a grand finale on the 24th of May, where our finalists pitched their ideas to a panel of senior Deloitte employees and Debate Mate Alumni, with winners being invited to present their winning ideas to a wider audience at the virtual showcase. Each **winning team was awarded £1000 and will receive support from Deloitte's Greenhouse** to make their pitch ideas a reality!

OUR RESULTS

Debate Mate's programmes help students to develop skills that are key to success in higher education and employment in the 21st Century. To evaluate our impact, we carry out assessments which measure students' hard and soft skills, reflecting how students have progressed as a result of their participation in our programme. The evaluations also inform changes to the programme year-on-year.

HARD SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Debate Mate uses a bespoke speaking and listening metric designed in consultation with teachers to measure students' hard skills development. The skills assessed in the metric are derived from the National Curriculum at Key Stages 2 and 3 (Department for Education, 2014). These guidelines were mapped onto the skills that Debate Mate teaches to form a holistic metric that tracks students' progress continuously up to GCSE and beyond. Debate Mate's metric tracks progress through seven skill categories:

- SK1 Collaboration**
- SK2 Listening and Responding Appropriately**
- SK3 Articulating and Justifying an Argument**
- SK4 Using Evidence**
- SK5 Structuring Speeches**
- SK6 Style**
- SK7 Quality of Spoken Language**

**Students
with English
as an additional
language make
MORE PROGRESS
than their peers**

Each skill category is given a level from 0 to 8, describing a wide range of abilities that might be observed in students from Years 5 to 10. Trained members of our team use this metric to assess students in the first and last debate of the year, moderated by teachers.

Our usual hard skills data collection processes were disrupted due to ongoing restrictions regarding visitors to schools throughout the academic year. Consequently, we were unable to collect statistically significant hard skills data for the 2021-2022 programme year. Nonetheless, our aggregate data collected from 2015-2019 shows that, on average, students (secondary and primary) make 1.4 levels of progress throughout the year, with students who speak English as an additional language making more progress than their peers over the course of the programme. This is a remarkable achievement, and is supported by the fact 87% of our teachers report that Debate Mate has accelerated student progress in speaking and listening.

Debating has a significant impact on speaking and listening skills, as students learn not only to articulate their ideas in a structured way, but also to respond to other participants' points through active listening and engagement.

SOFT SKILLS ASSESSMENT

To monitor our impact on soft skills, we have developed a student self-assessment survey to collect data on each of our measurement objectives: **confidence, self-esteem, resilience, leadership, teamwork, self-management, critical thinking, and aspirations**. The soft-skills metric was designed in consultation with New Philanthropy Capital and draws upon existing literature of each of the characteristics measured.

At the end of the 2021-22 programme year, 1350 students completed our post-programme survey. They were asked 'Since you have started debating at school, how have the following things changed?' We have highlighted some of their responses below.

80% are more confident when speaking up in class*

are better able to use feedback to reflect on their learning and improve their skills **89%**

88% are better able to respond to and respectfully disagree with the ideas of others

90% are more confident giving their opinion on issues in the world around them**

86% are more likely to put their ideas forward when working in a group**

91% are better able to come up with their own opinions and arguments**

89% say the skills they have learnt will help them succeed in further studies and training

90% are more likely to help others when working in a group*

* Results from our Primary School Programme

** Results from our Secondary School Programme

NEW PROGRAMMES

THE VIRTUAL CORE PROGRAMME

At the start of the pandemic, **Debate Mate immediately** switched to online delivery - supporting students at home, as well as the children of key workers in schools, by **developing and delivering debating sessions virtually**.

New research is showing that the initial striking shift that the pandemic initiated in School's attitudes towards their Pupil Premium spending - to prioritising **spending additional funds on IT equipment, mostly laptops with internet access - is likely to last in the long term** (Social Mobility Commission, 2021). This, combined with the long-term trend that **disadvantaged pupils outside of urban areas are most affected by decreasing social mobility** (The Social Mobility Commission, 2016), has opened up a new opportunity for Debate Mate to invest in by permanently offering a Virtual Core Programme, so that we may **reach schools and students outside of our historic catchment criteria**.

"Thank you for all your hard work - the programme is really worthwhile and all materials are engaging and clear. This has been great for building confidence and filling gaps in the curriculum!"

**Teacher from
CST Trinity Academy, Bristol**



We are proud that this past academic year marks Debate Mate's launch and pilot of an online version of the Core Programme - the Virtual Core Programme - which allowed for schools from **across nine different cities and regions of England** to take part in weekly debate training, and a national debating competition, **where they otherwise would not have had the opportunity to do so**. In total, 4 primary schools and 6 secondary schools took part in the programme during its pilot year.

The programme began with a launch event, where schools were invited to watch a show debate featuring champion debaters and Debate Mate students. The event allowed students and teachers alike to **see how effectively debating could be done virtually**, and gave a standard for new students to aim towards over the course of the programme.



Taking the lead from the Core Programme, students then took part in 10 weekly virtual debate sessions. Guided by two mentors, students took part in activities designed to **develop their core confidence, public speaking, critical thinking, teamwork and empathy skills**. These key skills were put into practice during the final debate competition, the inaugural Debate Mate Virtual Cup. Congratulations to Maghull High School in Merseyside, who are the first winners of this new competition!

WALES CORE PROGRAMME PILOT



This past year we expanded our Core Programme to Wales with the launch of our Cardiff Programme Pilot, engaging with **8 schools and over 150 students** each week for the length of the condensed 13-week programme. Over 100 students attended the Launch of the programme at the prestigious **Cardiff Town Hall** in March 2022.



Following the same structure as the Core Programme, students then took part in weekly training sessions, an Urban Debate League competition as well as the **Debate Mate Cup, which we are excited to have been able to host at the Principality Stadium**. We want to say a special thank you to FinTech Wales, Cardiff Commitment and Cardiff Council for making this such a success and we look forward to growing the programme next year!

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMES

BEHAVIOURAL INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES

THE ACCELERATE PROGRAMME

Through teaching our unique debating methodology during school time, the Accelerate Programme **empowers students who have been identified as having behavioural issues, being disengaged in the classroom and/or at risk of exclusion.**

This intervention programme focuses on giving students **the skills to express themselves clearly and to disagree with composure** - improving their ability to engage in the classroom, and more widely at school and elsewhere. Students take part in 15-weeks of teaching sessions and an exclusive online Accelerate competition, before being invited to take part in the Debate Mate Cup alongside their peers on the Core Programme.

This year we ran the programme in 21 primary and secondary schools across Liverpool, Manchester, the West Midlands and London, reaching over 200 students.

Developing the
CONFIDENCE,
DESIRE,
& SKILLS
to participate
in the classroom
and beyond!



DEBATEBOX

We are pleased to have partnered with the London Sports trust as well as our longstanding partners at the Harrow Club for DebateBox's sixth year. With an expanded focus on West and South-West London boroughs, the programme is now offered to seven schools, and over this past year, we have welcomed our first primary school students to the 10-week programme.



We run two DebateBox programmes annually, launching in both October and May, which are attended by up to 20 students from participating schools, selected by their teachers due to their level of disengagement with school. The programme consists of weekly sessions where students participate in an hour of boxing coaching and an hour of Debate Mate training, focusing on the shared skills needed to excel in both disciplines: self-control, creative and critical thinking, resilience, determination, commitment and self-confidence. The programme works towards a competitive DebateBox Cup in which students debate and box in succession, in an innovative and engaging format.

ADVANCED DEBATING PROGRAMMES

DEBATE MATE PLUS

Teaching students to use debating skills in the working world

The Debate Mate Plus programme is aimed at 15-18 year old students and designed to put their debating skills to use in the real world. Students are guided through a curriculum focused on the application of debating skills in a professional context, engaging with professionals from a range of industries throughout the course of the programme.



Having attended our virtual programme launch, held in partnership with Bank of America, students from 14 schools took part in weekly after-school debating sessions and attended two virtual debating competitions. We were delighted to partner with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office for the third year, delivering a bespoke experience alongside current diplomats before students debated on topics related to government policy.

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Every Thursday and Saturday, students who have excelled on our Core Programme have the opportunity to receive advanced debate coaching and take part in social leadership projects in their own communities. This past year, students from Birmingham, London and Manchester took part in this programme in person or online.

Our students compete in, and thrive at, national debating competitions historically dominated by students from the top private schools. This year, they competed in seven national British Parliamentary competitions, as well as a variety of public speaking competitions, regularly reaching finals and coming in the top ten best speakers at competition. Debating alongside some of the top private school and university student debaters from across the country helps to not only develop our students' debate skills, but to build confidence competing against and with students from a range of backgrounds and abilities.

Helping to create **WORLD-CLASS DEBATORS**

Many Graduate School students also begin mentoring on our Core Programme, becoming some of our most passionate and strong mentors, and develop their understanding of competitive debate through taking leadership roles in running our Debate Mate Schools competition, open to schools across the UK.

A YEAR IN A DEBATE MATE SCHOOL

ELMHURST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Based in Newham, East London, Elmhurst Primary School has experienced great successes on the Debate Mate Core Programme since it joined the primary school programme in its inaugural year in 2010.. As one teacher reports: “[Debate Mate] is consistently the highlight of my year. The impact it has on the kids in terms of their confidence and their eloquence is profound, and on top of that the academic impact is huge as well”. This year was no different for the 30 year 5 and 6 students that attended the weekly Debate Mate club and competitions, as well as those students engaged in additional opportunities throughout the year.

BREAKFAST DEBATES

September 2021

Students from Elmhurst debated alongside Debate Mate mentors and staff at special fundraising breakfast events throughout the academic year.



PROGRAMME LAUNCH

November 2021

Thirty students attended the Primary Programme launch event held at the Emmanuel Centre in London. They watched a showcase debate featuring students and world class debaters.



“[Debate Mate] is a real sort of spark moment where the students suddenly realise that their voice matters. They realise that people, regardless of age, are willing to listen to them, if they can speak coherently and persuasively. It really shows them why debating is important.”

– Lead Teacher at Elmhurst Primary

CLUBS START

November 2021

The week following the programme launch, our Core Programme clubs started. Elmhurst had 3 mentors running sessions for 30 students throughout the year.

THE URBAN DEBATE LEAGUE ROUND 1 & 2

February & March 2022

After weeks of coaching from their mentors, students attended the first round of the Urban Debate League, with 20 students competing against schools in their local area. Following up on a strong first round performance, students returned to the competition a month later, and were given the additional challenge of debating on a prepared motion.

THE DEBATE MATE CUP

April 2022

Putting into practice learning and feedback from the year, 20 students attended the London Debate Mate Cup, taking part in three debates and the final!

DELOITTE BETTER FUTURES

May 2022

Elmhurst welcomed several volunteers from Deloitte into their regular after-school club. Using their debating skills, students pitched an idea to the volunteers to help tackle climate change, and learnt more about life working at Deloitte.

NATIONAL FINALS

June 2022

After another strong year on the programme, Elmhurst made it to the national finals of both the Debate Mate Cup and the Urban Debate League, as well as the national finals of Deloitte Better Futures - a testament to the hard work of everyone involved with the programme at the school!



"I think the most important skill I've learned from Debate Mate is finding the courage to do other things, like auditioning for Shakespeare in school and pitching my ideas to help stop climate change. I've also learned general knowledge and now I always like to watch news with my parents because it's really interesting"

-Year Six Student

LOOKING TO THE YEAR AHEAD



Now, more than ever, we are seeing the disproportionate effects that the global pandemic is having, and will continue to have, on disadvantaged students compared to their peers. Our priority will always remain to ensure that we continue to reach the students that need our training programmes the most. Looking ahead, we are excited to offer a permanent programme in Wales and hope that - through expanding our Virtual Core Programme - we can work with even more schools in cities, towns and villages all over the UK, reaching the young people who would benefit from our programmes the most. We are also looking to expand our additional programmes to even more cities and regions, ensuring that we are able to show students all around the country that debating really is for everyone!

The development of key transferable skills in a time of structural economic change will be integral to supporting students' attainment today, and preparing them for the future world of work. Having enjoyed two years of partnership with Deloitte for their Better Futures Month, we hope to sustain and grow new partnerships that will give our students access to diverse industries, experiences and people.

Debate Mate has successfully grown our international operations over the course of the pandemic, engaging over 3,000 students from over 35 countries all around the world. With the world opening back up, we hope to deliver our international summer programmes in person again next summer, reconnecting with the global Debate Mate family in person, and continuing our work with long-standing international partners and schools.

As Debate Mate enters its 15th year, we look forward to continuing to see former Debate Mate students mentoring with us and inspiring young people across the UK. We will continue to support our Debate Mate family and look forward to working with our mentors, teachers and students in the coming year.

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