



NEWS RELEASE  
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## **Baltimore Afterschool Program Wins National Award for Outstanding Programming for Middle School Students**

### ***Baltimore Urban Debate League Recognized for Supporting Academic Success and Common Core State Standards***

The Afterschool Alliance today honored the Baltimore Urban Debate League (BUDL) with the 2014 MetLife Foundation Afterschool Innovator Award. The award, sponsored by MetLife Foundation, recognizes the program's success in supporting and benefiting middle school students through developing their debating skills. The award was presented at the "Breakfast of Champions," a gala event in Washington, D.C. featuring Members of Congress and national Afterschool Alliance champions.

BUDL was one of only five afterschool programs in the country recognized for using innovative approaches to help middle school students succeed in the programs, school and life. The Afterschool Innovator Award includes \$10,000 for BUDL to expand its work. BUDL CEO Pamela Block Brier and seventh grade student Darren Meredith accepted the award on behalf of the program.

"The middle school years are critical years for a child's development," said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. "Afterschool programs can play a central role in helping middle school students develop confidence and life skills that will help them succeed. We are honored to join the Afterschool Alliance in recognizing the Baltimore Urban Debate League for its outstanding work keeping middle school children safe and supported after school."

BUDL is a debate program serving more than 300 middle school students in 17 public schools that serve primarily low-income families. The program helps students learn to present an argument using evidence, evaluate the merit and credibility of evidence, respond clearly to questions raised about that argument, and listen to and learn from others. These critical thinking skills align closely with the Common Core. Classroom teachers provide coaching and mentoring to students in the program. Evaluations reveal that students who participate in the program are more likely to attend college than their peers. In 2012, 95 percent of seniors who had participated in BUDL were accepted to college.

"We use the skills we teach in BUDL to help enrich students' academic experience and overall development," said Block Brier. "Through debate, our students become engaged learners, critical thinkers, citizen leaders and effective advocates. The program also prepares our students for success in school and college admissions. We are helping to make a difference in the lives of

young people across Baltimore and we are honored to be recognized for that work by MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance.”

BUDL is featured in an [Issue Brief](#) on the Afterschool Alliance’s website on how afterschool programs benefit middle school students. The Afterschool Alliance’s Issue Brief series examines the role of afterschool programs in addressing a variety of contemporary issues facing youth, schools and communities.

“Afterschool programs do so much for students – helping them discover new talents, develop new skills, and have new experiences – all in social environments that help those students feel safe and supported,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “There is great potential in these programs to make an important and lasting difference in lives of middle school students who participate in them. We are pleased to work with MetLife Foundation to recognize and honor the programs that are excelling in this area.”

The “Breakfast of Champions” is part of the 13<sup>th</sup> annual *Afterschool for All Challenge*, sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance, which brings together hundreds of educators, parents, afterschool leaders and advocates from around the country for a series of events and meetings with Members of Congress. After the Breakfast, attendees headed to Capitol Hill for meetings with their senators and representatives to discuss the ways afterschool programs benefit children, families and communities.

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*The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*