

MAKING WAVES AT DCS



Summer Vs. Winter? Dogs Vs. Cats?

6th Grade Students Learn About Debate from DHS Debate Team Members

Creekside 6th graders were recently visited by members of the DHS Debate & Forensics Team to learn more about debating as a precursor to a Summit Learning project entitled “Athens Vs. Sparta: Which city state was superior?” In addition to demonstrating the basics of debate, this cross-building activity informed Creekside students of the opportunity to join the Debate and Forensics Team at either middle or high school level.

Working in groups of three, DHS students presented in several classrooms detailing the difference between debate and forensics, sharing tips of effective debate strategy and answering student questions. A debate at the high school level is performed with a partner and is based on a globally-significant topic that changes every two months. Debaters research and prepare both the pros and cons of an issue, so they are prepared not only to argue the side assigned in competition, but to rebut the other team’s contentions. A round of debate is fast-flowing, lasts 60 minutes and each team must present their points within short frames of time (1-4 minutes).

DHS students shared that debaters spend many hours researching their topics, and are prepared to cite quotes and facts from experts to support their argument. It is vital that team members listen to the opposing side’s contentions in order to understand and prepare appropriate rebuttals. The high schoolers also reminded 6th graders to always be professional and kind in debate, not to criticize or allow the argument to become personal.

The highlight of the morning was the opportunity for several pairs of 6th graders to participate in actual debates, based on extremely hard-hitting and controversial topics: “Dogs vs. Cats,” “Summer vs. Winter,” “Ice Cream vs. Pizza” and “Sleeping In vs. Waking Up Early.” Students passionately argued their side of all topics; evidence given in the “Summer vs. Winter” debate included, “summer is best because you have to wear too many outside clothes in winter,” and “I like winter better because when you get in your car on a summer day, it’s burning hot!”

6th grade teacher, Narda Black, suggested students remember the “hamburger paragraph” organizing method when creating their debate arguments: stating your claim is the top bun, the middle is your supportive reasoning and the bottom bun is your closing argument.

In Matthew Brown’s class, students had many questions for the Debate Team members, several focusing on what they do if they get stuck or don’t know how to respond in a match. Team members shared they spend so much time researching and preparing their arguments that while getting stuck is a possibility, they can usually respond in some way. They also shared the many benefits they’ve gained by participating in debate, such as becoming more comfortable with public speaking, increased organization and being better prepared for class presentations. Other student questions centered around the time commitment, and if students can participate in debate while playing a fall/winter sport or extracurricular activity (they can).

At the conclusion of her classroom session, Summit teacher Kirsten Butler shared a video of DHS Debate Team member Alex Gilbert when he was her 6th grade student in 2016. Both the 6th graders and high school students thoroughly enjoyed seeing an energetic young Alex do the Chicken Dance and the YMCA, with Mrs. Butler dancing along in the background; a light-hearted ending to an interactive and informative learning experience.

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