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BEATTY MIDDLE SCHOOL'S 2023 DIVISION 1 ACADEMIC PENTATHLON TEAM BRINGS HOME OVERALL TEAM WINS

*Beatty's Sixth Grade Teams Earn First and Second Place Overall;
Seventh Grade Brings Home Third; Eighth Grade Wins Second*

Buena Park, CA — Dr. Yvette Cantu, Interim Superintendent, walks into Mr. McDonald and Mrs. Kim's adjoining sixth grade classrooms singing "We Are the Champions," accompanied by Dr. Joaquin Valdez, Principal at Beatty Middle School. Together, they unroll a celebratory banner and ask the two Academic Pentathlon coaches to pose for pictures. There is a lot to celebrate.

Of the 25 teams at each grade level from across Orange County competing in the OC Department of Education's 2023 Academic Pentathlon, Gordon H. Beatty earned the first and second place overall team prizes for sixth grade, second place overall for eighth grade, and third place overall for seventh grade. Schools competing in the Pentathlon are grouped into six divisions based on last year's performance. Over the 14 years that Beatty has competed, they have worked their way into the most competitive Division 1 for sixth and eighth grade and Division 2 for seventh grade, compounding the achievement of these overall team wins.

The Academic Pentathlon is not for the faint of heart. Students study all year for this three-day event in which they are tested both individually and as a team in social studies, science, fine arts, literature, and math (individual only). The theme this year was the American Revolution. Students read the novel *Chains* by Laurie Halse Anderson, along with Thomas Payne's pamphlet "Common Sense" and Phillis Wheatley's poem "On Being Brought from Africa to America," and they studied the history, science, music, and art of the time period. The Pentathlon is a three-day competition: Day 1 is the essay, Day 2 is the individual multiple-choice tests, and Day 3 is the team "Super Quiz" and awards.

"I just wanted to try something new and have something to belong to at school," says Kylie, a member of the sixth grade team. "It turned out to be pretty fun, and it's not that hard when you do it as a team." Eaden agrees: "I learned a lot of new math strategies, and it's fun to know advanced stuff, especially getting ready for next year." Sarah, also in the sixth grade, prefers the essay section.

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"I discovered that it's actually pretty enjoyable to write, and it helps me in my classes, too," she says.

Mrs. Kim, one of the Academic Pentathlon coaches, loves learning the material along with the students. "I have no idea why they would want to do so much extra work, but the secret is that the kids like it, and they want to be part of it," she says. "They are incredibly motivated to learn, and they enjoy being with their friends, too."

Mr. McDonald was part of the team that first brought the Academic Pentathlon to Beatty. "A long time ago, we decided that we wanted to change the culture of the school," he recalls, "and to make it better academically." He remembers thinking about the concept of a hero culture as they contemplated this change. "If you build a culture, you have to have heroes and legends – things in common and people to admire," he reflects. In some schools, students look up to the sports heroes – the softball pitcher or the quarterback. But at Beatty, he wanted students to look up to the academic heroes and to strive to be like them in academic competitions.

"The Academic Pentathlon showcases more than just academic preparedness and knowledge," reflects Dr. Cantu. "This competition requires stamina, with students who support one another and cheer each other on as a team. We couldn't ask for a more conscientious, committed group of students to represent our school district."

"It really means something to be responsible to a group of people," Mr. McDonald adds. "You have to come in prepared and do your part. These students put in more time than everybody else – they come in early and stay late, and they just work hard. This competition matters to the students. And when students feel needed, it makes an impact on them. On all of us."

He offers one final thought as the bell rings: "If they have to compete when they graduate, why not start now?"

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Mrs. Kim (far L) and Mr. McDonald (far R) pose with Dr. Joaquin Valdez (Principal of Beatty) and Dr. Yvette Cantu (Interim Superintendent) to commemorate Beatty's OCDE Pentathlon win.



The Beatty Middle School 2023 Academic Pentathlon Team



The Beatty team shows off their individual medals.