



## DEBATE TEAM SUCCESS: A CULTURE OF COMMITMENT

Imagine, as a teenager, spending your free time researching and writing arguments about morality, public policy and law.

What motivates a group of students to spend long hours arguing about ethics or world events when they could be hanging out with friends, going to sporting events, or gaming? Students who enjoy reading, researching, writing, and discussing issues for debate events are among the brightest in the country. And they are very competitive.

“I believe that there is no better activity to do in high school than debate,” Mountain Brook High School junior and debater Zijie Yin said, “because it forces one to think critically not only about the function and interactions of different arguments, but also allows oneself to delve

deeper into what constitutes the good life and how to distinguish right from wrong.”

“Something most people don’t realize about debate is it makes you mentally tough,” says junior debater Haley Siddall. “You learn to accept the good with the bad to work harder than anyone else if you want to win.”

Some debaters focus on the opportunity to interact with other debaters. “The people are what I love most about debate,” sophomore Chamblee Shufflebarger said. “It’s great to meet all sorts of interesting people and to hear all the different things they will say in a round. This is especially true when you actually get to know these people in between debate rounds or at debate camp. And the MBHS team members - we’re practically like family and they are

some of the nicest, most intelligent people I have ever met.”

Haley Siddall loves the excitement involved in debating. “I think the one thing I love most about it is the suspense. Every round there is something new, some new curveball thrown at you. You learn information on the most interesting topics and are forced to form opinions (on both sides, of course) and debate them.”

Mountain Brook High School debate coach Jeff Roberts describes the commitment of students to debate. “Our debaters spend the first part of their summer preparing for the national tournament and then attend debate camps for several weeks afterward. By the time they fin-

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ish with those, it is time to start school again in August. During the school year, they give up many of their weekends to travel around the country competing in debate tournaments.”

Chamblee prefers participating in debate to other activities. “I find that debate tournaments are a better use of my time than sitting at home all weekend being lazy or going to the movies or something. Given that getting up early for the tournament isn’t very pleasant, the rounds are still fun. Also, without debate, I would have never been to Harvard or Wake Forest, or the school where they shot Ferris Bueller’s Day Off. It’s a great expe-

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—Haley Siddall, MBHS debater

rience to be able to travel across the country with people who can talk with you about anything for an entire plane ride. Basically, debate is not an experience, it’s a lifestyle. An intense one. I wouldn’t give it up for anything.”

The culture of debate competition is a unique one. Like debate coaches, the students sharpen each other by challenging each other’s arguments both in and out of debate rounds. This increases the level of competition by increasing the critical thinking around refuting arguments and makes all the debaters better.

From an educational perspective, the debate “classroom” goes way beyond physical classroom because the feedback students receive from teachers from all over the country broadens their learning experiences. Former debate coach and administrative services director Lisa Beckham believes learning occurs in both. “When students present their arguments, refute their opponents’ arguments, and get constructive feedback from the judges who are other debate coaches, lawyers, and other professionals in the field, they learn as much as, if not more than, from all their research and writing. They gain perspective from other cultures and communities and are forced to think critically about social and ethical issues from all angles.”

Graduates of Mountain Brook High School agree that the debate program is high quality and teaches students lifelong skills. State Representative Paul DeMarco, a Mountain Brook graduate, described his involvement in debate as a highlight of his high school years. “Debate was a great training ground for public speaking, doing

## Three Types of Debate

In **Lincoln-Douglas** debate, debaters must argue for and against a proposition of value which concerns what ought to be instead of what is. In Lincoln-Douglas debate, debaters will argue over widely held values about what ought to be the case rather than what may actually be the case.

**Policy debate** is team debate where one side proposes a plan, in the form of a resolution, to solve a problem and the opposing team argues against the plan. It typically calls for policy change by the federal government. It is characterized by very rapid speech, which makes it largely inaccessible to general audiences.

**Public Forum debate**, is public friendly, no prior training required, and is the kind of debate often seen in televised political debates. In Public Forum, invented by Ted Turner for his networks, debaters argue over current events in a style typical of Cross-Fire style television news shows.



research, and preparation for both public service and my law career. I received a great education at Mountain Brook High School, and the extracurriculars like debate that prepare you for real life experiences are invaluable. I’m really proud of what the debate team has accomplished over the years, and I’m glad I was a part of it.”

A goal of Coach Roberts’ is to increase community awareness of the debate program and build

support for it. “I want to continue to build ownership in this team and this activity. Our community has a debate program that is among the best in the country. Our program was one of the top 10 in the nation for the last four years. Many people don’t know what debate is but they know that we’re a winning school; I think that’s the culture you have to have to succeed consistently and that’s the culture that we want.”

## HIGHLIGHTS OF MBHS DEBATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 2005-2011 State Champions in Debate events
- 2009 & 2011 Overall (all events, theatre, speech, congress, and Debate) School State Champions
- 2009-2011 a MBHS Debater finished inside the top 10 in the nation at the National Championship – over 110,000 high school students are members of speech and debate teams
- 2009 made “Elite Eight” of the Tournament of Champions
- 2011 made the “Sweet Sixteen” at the Tournament of Champions
- 2007 MBHS won every in-state tournament’s over-all team award
- 2011 Mountain Brook won the Barkley Forum at Emory University
- 2009 MBHS won JV Policy National Championships at Woodward HS in GA
- 2009 MBHS was one of only two schools in the country to qualify teams to the Tournament of Champions in all three major debate events
- 2011 MBHS was 4th place in Policy Debate at the National Championships
- 2010-11 MBHS made the 100 club of the NFL Honor Society
- 2010 MBHS made the top 32 at the National Debate Coach Association Championships
- 2011 MBHS was named the Deep South District Leading Chapter
- Many individual state champions
- Individual state championships in Extemporaneous Speaking, Impromptu Speaking, After Dinner Speaking, and Congress.
- 2007 MBHS Coach named AFEA coach of the year, in 2009 the AFEA student of the year, 2010 the AFEA competitor of the year, and in 2010 & 2011 the NFL Deep South District Honor Society Student of the year



## Jeff Roberts, Mountain Brook High School Debate Coach

THE REPORTER: How long have you coached debate and how did you get into it?

**JEFF ROBERTS:** This is my sixth year as head coach. I was not a debater in high school or college. I, sort of, fell into being a debate coach. I have a personality that is suited to wanting to do something like this and am extremely competitive, and I don't like doing anything unless I can do it all the way. Before I moved into coaching debate full time, I felt as though I



wasn't able to give my all to being both an English teacher and a part-time debate coach, and I wanted to do really well at one of them. (MBHS Principal) Mr. Wilson asked me which I wanted to do and I chose to coach debate full-time.

Q: Obviously, debate requires travel and interaction with other teams and with other coaches. What is the culture like among high school debate coaches?

A: Our community is coast-to-coast and students are able to present their learning and their thinking through debate rounds. Our kids see the best educators from the best high schools from the entire country at every competition. This creates a large body of people who serve as teachers for our students at these events. My professional learning community consists of the other coaches I come in contact with at tournaments, in between rounds and in the tab room and at the conferences and coaching institutes I attend. We talk about best practices and it's a practicum in professional learning. When I go to Harvard and other places to teach debate in the summer, I'm sharing labs with the best coaches in the country. The debate coaches group is so supportive of each other because the better a coach I am, the better my students are at debate and the better the competition is at every tournament.

# WEB Leaders

## WEB Leaders Welcome and Support New MBJH Students

Most of us who have been through junior high remember two universal concerns of being a new student: (1) dealing with new people and (2) being able to open our lockers. Those and more are addressed by Mountain Brook Junior High's WEB Leaders program. Now in its fourth year, WEB Leaders (Where Everybody Belongs) are 9th graders—this year a total of 83—who agreed to serve as leaders and role models for 7th graders. The big event at the beginning of the school year is Spartan Day. "Spartan Day gives the students the opportunity to develop new relationships with other 7th grade students," said principal Ben Hudson. "It allows them to meet teachers and visit classrooms before school starts. It helps with the transition to the junior high on social, academic and practical levels."

Faculty member Chad Sorrells, who cosponsors WEB Leaders with Adam Johnson, also emphasizes the intent of Spartan Day. "In a tight community," he said, "we have four groups of students who have been with the same group of kids for as long as seven years. So, the transition to a school where you don't know three-quarters of the students can be tough."

On Spartan Day, groups of ten 7th graders are assembled, with an eye toward each student interacting with 7th graders from elementary schools other than their own. Each team of ten 7th graders is led by two 9th grade WEB Leaders. "We have a pep rally to get them pumped up about school," Mr. Sorrells said. "We go through their schedules to get them used to the setting and we introduce them to key people. We hope that alleviates some of the anxiety about starting the year."

WEB Leader Griffin Cope agrees. "I came from Brookwood Forest which is a small school, so I was coming in to a much larger place. At this age, you tend to be self-conscious, but you really have to put yourself out there to make new friends."

Before Spartan Day, WEB leaders are selected



Spartan Day, August 2011

from a large pool of applicants. They participate in two days of training in the summer. Chandler Law, a WEB leader this year, said that the training taught the leaders how to help the 7th graders learn how to meet new people. "That's important for being able to be happy at the school," she said.

But the WEB Leaders program doesn't end on Spartan Day. WEB Leaders continue to check in with their assigned 7th graders during the year. More activities are sponsored by the WEB program. On a Sunday evening in December, the program sponsored "Cocoa & Cram," a study session attended by 50 students and 15 teachers, who gave up their Sunday evening to help students preparing for exams.

"WEB provides a support system for 7th grade students as they transition to the Junior High and for that first year," said principal Ben Hudson. "Also, it provides 9th grade students the opportunity to be leaders and to be role models."

Web leader Kristin Walton had a specific reason for choosing to be involved as a WEB leader. She transferred into MBJH in the middle of the 8th grade from Hoover. "I wanted to help new students at this school feel welcome, the same way I was made to feel welcome when I came here." to help new students at this school feel welcome, the same way I was made to feel welcome when I came here."

### LEGAL NOTICES

#### NONDISCRIMINATION NOTICE

The Mountain Brook School system does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability or age in any of its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following persons have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: Dr. Dale Wisely—Director of Student Services (Title VI), Mrs. Sylvia Harper—Personnel Director (Title IX), Dr. Missy Brooks—Director of Instruction (Title II), Mrs. Shannon Mundy—Special Education Director (Section 504). Contact Information: 32 Vine Street; Mountain Brook, AL 35213; 205-871-4608

### KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION SAVE THE DATE!

Mountain Brook Schools

Registration for All Incoming Kindergarten Students

<b>Mountain Brook Elementary</b>	<b>February 15</b>
<b>Brookwood Forest Elementary</b>	<b>February 16</b>
<b>Cherokee Bend Elementary</b>	<b>February 22</b>
<b>Crestline Elementary</b>	<b>February 28</b>

For more information, call your elementary school office.



# Mountain Brook City Schools Foundation



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## Mountain Brook City Schools Foundation Funds Library Enhancement

Each year the Mountain Brook City Schools Foundation evaluates a request from the school system for funding that will affect student learning in the areas of technology, staff development and library enhancement. For the 2011-2012 school year, an allocation was made for each school library. Much like in the classrooms, the technology needs and applications are constantly changing in the libraries/media centers. No longer places where silence and stillness prevail, libraries are now centers of activity. The following are comments from Jan Winstead and Steven Yates who are the librarians at Mountain Brook High School regarding the value of the additions to the library because of funding from the foundation:

*Activity is never in short supply at the MBHS library. With an average of over 1,000 patron visits per day, the library strives to provide access to print and digital resources for all of its stakeholders. One way the Mountain Brook City Schools Foundation has helped the library achieve this goal is providing funds for the continued development of an ebook collection for research on a variety of subjects.*

*These ebooks are revolutionizing the way our students access information for research. For roughly the cost of one print copy of a book, the library is able to purchase unlimited online access to the book. This access allows any student wanting to use the book the chance to read it at the same time as their classmates whether at school or at home. If the school library owns the ebook format, the library staff puts a label inside the print book to notify the students. The students can also search the library catalog and icons identify books that are available in ebook format. The librarians instruct the students on accessing the ebooks from school and home, furnishing login and password information at the time of instruction. The students are taught how to use the ebook features including searching within the books, an option far more digital learner-friendly than using the index. Other features include the ability to "arrow" to specific chapters and the option of printing directly from the computer. The number of ebooks on our research topics is still limited but the availability and quality is improving. This revolutionary research development does not replace our rich print collection or the Alabama Virtual Library. Instead, it gives students the opportunity to take full advantage of the MBHS library collection. Without the support of the MBCS Foundation, the MBHS library could not provide this research tool for its 21st century learners.*

### Learn More About The Foundation

If you have questions about the activities of the Mountain Brook City Schools Foundation, call our office at 414-0042 or visit the website at [www.mtnbrookschoolsfoundation.com](http://www.mtnbrookschoolsfoundation.com). We welcome your interest and we invite you to join in our efforts to provide funding for academics in the Mountain Brook Schools. Although much has been accomplished thanks to the over \$4.4 million in funding that has already been provided by the foundation, much more can be achieved with your participation. Please make an investment in education that will benefit our schools for years to come. A pledge card is included in this publication or you can download one from our website.

### Mountain Brook High School Class of 2002 Reunion

Planning is underway for the 10-year reunion for the Class of 2002. The reunion will take place this spring or early summer, and the official dates for the reunion and a preliminary schedule of events will appear in the next issue of The Reporter. Organizers will be communicating with class members by email and snail mail, so please update your contact information as follows:

Reunion Email Address:

[mbhsclassof2002@gmail.com](mailto:mbhsclassof2002@gmail.com)

Carmine Jordan, Executive Director,

Mountain Brook Schools Foundation:

[mbcsfoundation@bellsouth.net](mailto:mbcsfoundation@bellsouth.net)

Facebook: "MBHS 2002 Reunion!" Group

