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Miramonte Public Speaking Places in Top 10 Schools at National Championships

Submitted by Kristin Plant



Back row, from left: Kristen Plant, Connor Meckfessel, Charles Correll, Bennett Stehr, Daniel Galarza, Bryan Wang, and Sandra Maguire. Front row: Daniel Ginsburg, Ethan Miles, Mathison Young, and Jonathan Zhou. Photo Kristen Plant

Ethan Miles, advanced to elimination rounds in international extemporaneous speaking.

Most notably, Miramonte's continued success in Congressional debate makes it the premier high school for Congressional debate in the country. Graduated senior, and this year's state champion in the event, Charles Correll, earned 14th in the Senate, and incoming senior Bennett Stehr placed 11th. Incoming senior Connor Meckfessel placed in the top five in the House of Representatives for the second year in a row! Retired teacher and hall of fame coach, Sandra Maguire, continues to serve the program as an assistant coach focusing on Congressional debate. Maguire joined Plant and the students on stage at the awards ceremony to accept the Senator Karl E. Mundt Congressional Trophy. This marks the third time Miramonte has won this prestigious award recognizing ongoing excellence in this form of debate where students author and debate legislation in a format similar to our elected legislators. Stehr and Meckfessel, the Congress co-captains, can't wait to share all that learned at Nationals with the rest of the team.

Thanks to the Matadors achievements in both speech and debate events, Miramonte was honored as a School of Outstanding Distinction, an award given to the top 10 schools at the national championships! Less than 20 percent of American high schools offer public speaking programs, but Miramonte Public Speaking is thriving after 30 years. Indeed, over 180 students signed up for the class next year, so Plant's colleague Franck Reyherme - who, like Plant, graduated from Miramonte having enjoyed success as a competitive public speaker - will help teach a class next year.

"I'm so excited that seven of our national competitors will return to lead the team next year," says Plant. "Whether students focus on building communication skills in the classroom, or test their talents in competition, Miramonte Public Speaking allows them to speak their truth and to gain invaluable life skills."

Nine of Miramonte's best and brightest competitive public speakers won top honors at this year's National Forensic League (NFL) tournament held in Birmingham, Ala., June 16-21.

Each spring, thousands of students across the country compete in local speech and debate tournaments to earn the privilege of qualifying for NFL Nationals, the largest academic competition in the world. Head coach and teacher Kristin Plant, who was also honored with her first Diamond Award for her achievements as a coach, had high expectations for this year's group after the Matadors had enjoyed great success at the California High School Speech Association's State Championships in April, and the team did not disappoint.

Incoming sophomores Jonathan Zhou and Daniel Ginsburg advanced to the elimination rounds of Public Forum debate on the topic "Resolved: The benefits of American drone strikes against foreign targets outweigh the harms." Another incoming sophomore, Bryan Wang, finished in the top 20 in supplemental event, Extemporaneous Commentary, where students analyze the issues of the day in the style of television news-anchors. Daniel Galarza, an incoming senior, represented well on the theatrical side of the competition, with his dramatic interpretations of literature, and incoming senior and team co-president,

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[back](#)

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