

Local students take top honors at state civics and debate competition, adding to district wins

Alachua County Public School (ACPS) students added several new speech and debate awards to a quickly-growing list during the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative (FCDI) Competition, which was held in Altamonte Springs this past weekend.

Local middle and high school students won 15 total prizes at the event, including five gold medals, in a wide variety of categories. ACPS teams took both the gold and silver medals in the Policy Debate team category.

Edrian Colburn-Deliz and Sanibil Wajid from Eastside High School won first place in both the high school and overall Policy Debate division, while Joel Cardenas and Michael Huan of Lincoln Middle School took first place among middle schools and 2nd place overall in the division.



Michaela George of Oak View Middle School took first place in middle school Extemporaneous Debate. Maggie Gao of Lincoln won gold in middle school Informative Speaking. Audrey Ellenburg of Newberry High School won first place in Varsity Impromptu Speaking.

The success of Alachua County Public Schools in the state competition comes just a few months after Lincoln Middle School student Ann Moywaywa cleaned up at the inaugural National Civics and Debate Championship, an invitational competition also sponsored by the FCDI. That contest drew more than 400 competitors from 60 schools across Florida and seven other states. Moywaywa took first place in Middle Congressional Debate, Middle



Extemporaneous Debate and Middle Impromptu Speaking and was the overall champion in the Middle School Division.



In March of this year, four Eastside High students also qualified for the National Speech and Debate (NSDA) Finals in Iowa in mid-June, including Juhyung Seong, Edrian Colburn-Delize, Tanvi Gawande and Alice Li. The four were among the top-performing students in a regional competition that covers about 25 Florida counties running from Osceola County to the Georgia border.

Eastside High also had winners in the Florida Forensic League competition earlier this month. That includes Sanabil Wajid and Naaday Ali Shah, the Novice State Policy Debate Champs, and Edrian Colburn-Deliz and Juhyung Seong, the Novice State Policy Debate Finalists.

Lincoln Middle School teacher Marna Weston, who coaches the speech and debate teams at both Lincoln Middle and Eastside High, was recently selected by the NSDA as a Policy Topic Fellow for 2024-25. Through the training and writing offered through the fellowship, Weston will join a select group of experts preparing the topics that will be debated by middle and high school students across the country during future competitions. It's an honor given to the nation's top coaches of political debate.

Other students who placed in the FCDI competition this past weekend include:

Avinoor Jutla, Lincoln Middle – 2nd place, Middle Extemporaneous Speaking
Nora Duffield, Gainesville High – 3rd place, High School Declamation
Isabella Applegate, Oak View Middle – 3rd place, Middle Impromptu Speaking
Peter Moywaywa, Eastside High – 4th place, High School Declamation
Lyndon Saylor Cravero, Oak View Middle – 4th place, Middle Congressional Debate
Mia Yu, Lincoln Middle – 4th place, Middle Original Oratory
Maxwell Xu, Lincoln Middle – 4th place, Middle Oral Interpretation
Jessica Zou, Lincoln Middle – 5th place, Middle Informative Speaking
Ann Moywaywa, Lincoln Middle – 5th place, Program Oral Interpretation
Kindred Tookelopez, Gainesville High – 6th place, High School Declamation

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