

THE PHOENIX

NEWSLETTER

Challenge BPA Wins Big at Regionals

Members of the Challenge Business Professionals of America (BPA) team that took top places in their recent competition qualify for state finals.

Page 2

A Journey in Poetry

Challenge students look to embrace National Poetry Month this year by hosting Challenge's first Poetry Night

Page 3

Crash Course in History

A new biweekly History TAKS review course has been instigated for juniors in order to raise scores on the upcoming test.

By Nathaniel Tedros

Student A achieved "Commended" status by answering 95% of the questions correctly on the History TAKS exam during their sophomore year. Student A achieved Commended once again during their junior year, with 90% correct, but because their score decreased they showed a "lack of student growth". Despite CECHS's newly achieved Exemplary status, this policy has resulted in Challenge being ranked last in HISD in terms of "student growth", and thus juniors will be required to meet every other Friday for a TAKS review class during one of the students' off periods.

The issue, as Principal Justin Fuentes sees it, is that, "With the data we've seen a lack of student growth, especially in the junior year." Students who don't improve from the last year's TAKS test show that they haven't learned anything new.

According to Fuentes, "The college teachers don't address the criteria that

are on the test." The curriculum at HCC is chosen more at the teacher's discretion, while the curriculum at Challenge follows a strict guideline given by HISD.

While students will be forced to give up one of their precious Friday off-periods for these sessions, students like Sade Davis think that the class is a great idea. Rather than simply treating it as a blow-off period, she thinks attendance for it is important, saying, "Why would you skip it? It's for your benefit."

While Principal Fuentes is uncertain about how long this class is going to last, he thinks "It may be going all the way up to the beginning of May."

This class will mostly focus on U.S. History, due to the discrepancies between HISD and HCC curriculum, and altogether Mr. Elizondo feels that, "the ultimate goal is to help the students get commended."



Although there are surely some juniors who think that this class is a waste of time and may be tempted to skip, those who do, "will have to face Ms. Chukwu and Mr. Elizondo," according to Mr. Fuentes, "because they care about how the department looks." On top of that, they will face general discipline.

Although Challenge's History TAKS scores rank them last in the district, they are doing everything in their power to improve and become a better school, because Challenge prides itself on being a 'small school with big ideas', and in order to live up to that title we must first live up to our title as an exemplary school.

Challenge BPA Wins Big at Regionals

Members of the Challenge Business Professionals of America (BPA) team that took top places in their recent competition qualify for state finals.

By Michael Wiggins

With members placing in the top five in five different categories at the recent Region Three competition, Challenge's Business Professionals of America (BPA) team threatens to usurp the Urban Debate League team as this school's most successful new organization.

Challenge took second place in the categories of Computerized Accounting and Prepared Speech, as well as third in Web Design, fourth in PC Service and Troubleshooting and fifth in Human Resources and Management. This makes BPA the first major extracurricular group at Challenge to qualify for state.

Not only did the team place against such large schools as Bellaire and Clear Brook, but they won top spots in one of the largest competitive regions in Texas, with over nine hundred participants. According to BCIS teacher and BPA sponsor Kanavis Mcghee, "Region Three is huge. It stretches all the way from Galveston to Palacios, to Clear Brook, to Brazosport, and Tomball."

In fact, some schools are so large that they have multiple BPA chapters, such as Clear Brook High School,



Mr. Mcghee discusses with the team how they are faring in their individual categories during the competition.

who has three that competed against each other and the rest of the region.

BPA President Ashley Lopez was surprised at the amount of competitors that attended. "It was really intimidating when we got there, because there were just so many people," she remarked.

The team's preparation for this massive event spanned all of the fall semester during their Friday club time. "We were able to get information about assignments and projects from previous BPA events, with all the specifics and recommendations for them," Mr. Mcghee explained. Ashley agreed, "We worked with previous tests and textbooks, so a lot of our members became really knowledgeable in their categories."

Junior Luke Jones, who helped win third place in Web Design, says he prepared by "gathering a lot of information with the team, as well as practicing with different designs."

However, while the team now has a chance to rejoice on the payoff for all of their hard work this year, they still have state finals looming ahead of them. Both Luke and Ashley agree that the state competition will be much harder. "Texas is a big state," Luke asserts, "There's certainly someone out there who is more prepared than us."

Nevertheless, this marks a great achievement for the team, particularly for one from a small school competing against those of larger, more established schools. Most importantly, as Mr. Mcghee adds, "It's an opportunity for the kids to network with major corporate company owners and get experience with business," as well as earn scholarships. All that leaves is for them to raise the money to get there.

THE PHOENIX



Several of the primary student founders and organizers of Challenge's first Poetry Night: (left to right) Joe Resendiz, Jesus Aguilar, Elmer Parada

A Journey in Poetry

Challenge students look to embrace National Poetry Month this year by hosting Challenge's first Poetry Night

By Raquel Azcué

Since 1996, April has been National Poetry Month, but never has it been celebrated at Challenge Early College High School. In honor of the occasion this year, CECHS will host a Poetry Night and participate in the Houston Grand Opera's Butterfly Project, which celebrates both the physical and metaphorical journeys that people experience, through the art of poetry.

The Butterfly Project, a collaboration between the Houston Grand Opera and various Houston schools, aims at making opera more accessible and interesting to people, while celebrating the journey that monarch butterflies make in relation to those of people.

The project, which is being organized by sophomores Joe Resendiz, Elmer Parada, Jesus Aguilar, Jasmine Suryawan, and Brandi Russel, as well as freshman Daniel Chavez and junior Erin Wahl, among others, encourages students to share the stories of their passages through life.

"The process of participating in the project is a journey in itself," explained sophomore English

teacher Matthew Martinez, who is involved with the project as well, because students are asked to go through the writing process with their contributions by writing, revising, and all other steps necessary to make a final product to be submitted to the Houston Grand Opera. In addition to being embraced by the students' English teachers, freshman English teacher David Brown as well as Mr. Martinez have made contributing to this project mandatory.

Although it is a citywide project with a major central theme, each school will address the project differently, with Challenge doing so via Poetry Night. At Poetry night, students will be able to express their voices through poetry, monologues, music, art, and other forms of literature, allowing the students to give a more meaningful and intimate feel to their pieces.

The school's first Poetry Night, organized by the same group of students involved with the Butterfly Project, will be held during April and will also showcase student work but will only be limited to students at CECHS, unlike the Butterfly Project. The Poetry Night will be hosted at school and given a café aura in order to give the students a more intimate environment in which they will be able to fully and freely express themselves. Overall, as Joe Resendiz puts it, "It will be a very unforgettable event, and a benchmark in how far Challenge has come as a school."