

# NEWSLETTER

Vol. 3, No. 2, Summer 2018

## Welcome to the Spring 2018 Climb Newsletter.

The Newsletter offers a glimpse into what we are doing and highlights the stories of students, coaches, and Climb staff that are reaching for the highest levels of excellence in speech and debate. A big thanks to Zach Maghirang and Sarah Salame who put together the initial draft of this newsletter and to all the participants that shared their experiences.

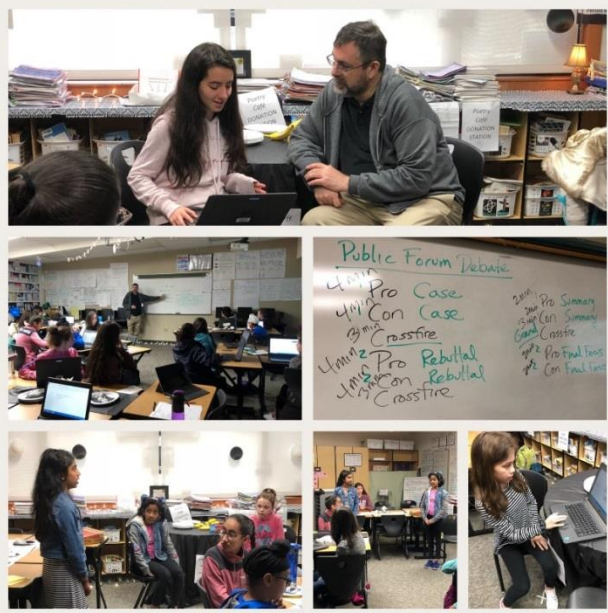
Enjoy and please feel free to contact me, Jim Hanson at [jim@climbthemountain.us](mailto:jim@climbthemountain.us) with ideas, edits, omissions, thoughts, etc.

Click on individual stories to read about Climb the Mountain!

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## Maywood Middle School

Climb the Mountain traveled to Maywood Middle School in April to hold a clinic for a group of students that regularly meet in an after-school speech and debate club.



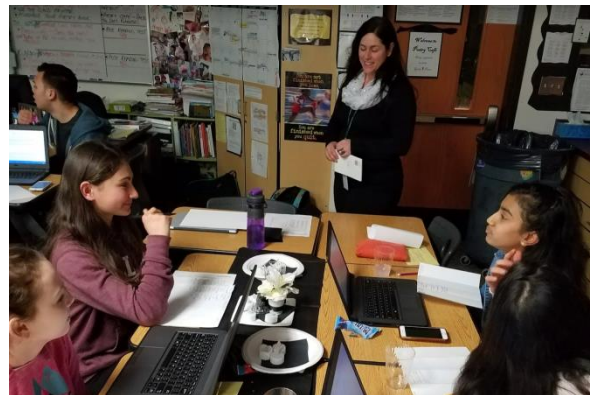
Jenna Silvestri (president of Maywood Speech and Debate) and Anjali Dixit (vice president) contacted Climb in order to jumpstart their program and prepare for the 2018-2019 debate season. Initially, there were six students interested in attending the single-day clinic. On the day of the clinic, almost 30 students arrived to learn the basics of debate and hone their skills!

At this clinic, students were taught Public Forum debate – the topic being for or against an increase in the quota of H-1B visas. At the start, students were given a brief overview and small file of evidence to assist with their understanding of the topic. Heading into the topic overview, Jim and Zach quickly realized that most of the students had never heard of H-1B visas before, adding a hurdle to get over in order to start debates.

Both Jim and Zach were impressed by how quickly the students picked up the basics of the topic, preparing pro and con cases that were supplemented by research they had gathered on their own! By the end of the day, all students had competed in a single debate round, providing high quality arguments for and against H-1B visas.

For Zach, it was especially rewarding to see the individual process of student learning as they worked to understand the nuances of the topic. While checking in on student progress he found one student frustrated, staring idly at a blank screen. This student was having trouble understanding the complicated wording of the resolution. After breaking down the resolution into smaller parts, the student was able to get past the confusing language and come up with an argument for more H-1B visas, asserting that it would create a more competitive engineering force in the United States.

*Interested in having Climb host a clinic at your school? Contact us for more information!*



## The Bush School

In January, Jim, accompanied by Tate Adams, traveled to The Bush School to help an excited group of debaters learn the basics of competitive debate – hoping to build their team. Tate was especially inspired by the students' motivation, and had the following to say about the group:

It was really cool to see the kids take the initiative on starting a competitive debate team. Fortunate as they are to have the resources and institutional support to get their program off the ground, those kids were obviously working with tenacity towards having their vision realized. The students were kind hosts and attentive, it really felt like they were there of their own volition, with motivation to learn and grow.”

The Bush School already has a strong middle school debate program and we hope they will add a full fledged high school program. Following their clinic with Climb, the team is ready to compete and they are eager for the opportunity to compete against students across the state.



## Jim tutors middle school students to success at the Seattle University tournament!

Jim was really excited to see three students he has worked with for over two years at the Seattle University's middle school debate tournament (a tournament Jim now hosts as the new Seattle University Director of Forensics). Jim noted:

Katelyn, Jean, and Sue have been a joy to teach. They've improved a great deal and they are solid speakers. At the same time, BC Academy also participated at the tournament and Climb the Mountain and I have had a long time working relationship with David Jung's BC Academy debate program.

I was very excited to see that after the 4 rounds of competition—Katelyn, Jean and Sue were undefeated! And advancing to finals, Jean and Sue hit YingYing—a BC Academy debater who I've coached as well. Ultimately, YingYing and her partner defeated Jean and Sue. The winner of that round did not matter to me. It was just really, really nice to see these two teams make it to finals showcasing their hard work and talents!

## Zach Tips: Getting students interested in debate

Participating in speech and debate can bring countless improvements in students' lives ranging from success with their individual studies to providing opportunities to make lifelong friends. While most of us reading this know this is true, many teams are facing issues getting students to stick with the activity after the first few meetings of the school year. Creating high student retention is a difficult task because speech and debate at the highest levels can be extremely demanding – some students spend over 20 hours a week researching, preparing, and practicing to be in top shape for their upcoming competitions.

If I were new to speech and debate and talked with experienced debaters about the activity I would be intimidated to commit to joining the team because it's presented as an activity that consumes all of your free time and becomes your life. For some students this may be a reality – but only because they've decided to commit their free time to improving their skills in speech and debate and attempt to compete at the highest level. For others, it is perfectly acceptable to participate with minimal hours, and I think this is something that is rarely emphasized to beginning debate students. With this in mind, here are four ideas to help increase student participation and retention on your debate team:



### 1. When students first arrive, get them talking!

- If speech and debate is an extracurricular activity at your school, students will be coming to meetings after an entire school day – usually requiring a lot of focus and listening. They will be tired, and the idea of sitting and listening to someone tell them about debate for another hour or more does not sound very interesting or exciting. Instead, ask for volunteers to participate in a mini-debate at the start. Use preconceptions of debate to your advantage – this will get them engaged at the start. You have to have a team before you can start coaching!

### 2. Keep meetings interesting – avoid creating a “School, Part 2”

- Building on the previous point, it's important that labs do not become a “School Part 2.” Be creative with your teaching, using a mix of lectures and activities so students have opportunities to relax. While there may be a lot of information to teach them, you don't want potential team members zoning out or goofing off because they are bored – especially considering they just finished six hours of learning! Having whole days where students can relax via fun team-building activities can help you avoid creating another school-like environment at meetings.

### 3. After the first competition, be a source of encouragement! Have students reflect and work with them to set realistic goals for their future success

- Following the first tournament, you will likely find yourself with a mix of students that are extremely motivated or discouraged – usually, but not always, dependent on their results. I found it useful to take time after their first competition to reflect: What did they think about their first competition? Moments they were proud of? Moments they weren't as proud of but would go about differently?
- After the reflection, have the students set goals for their next competition – this gives them something to work toward in a future competition, and the act of writing out their goals may help push them to continue in the activity.

### 4. Be upfront and honest about the work load based on student goals

- As important as it is to keep the team fun, with speech and debate being an academic activity there is naturally an amount of effort and work required by students to meet their goals and to be prepared to compete casually. Decide how you want the team to function then go from there – which students are responsible for what? If the students have high aspirations, tell them the amount of effort necessary to get to that point and help them on the way. It is great for students to set high goals, but if you embellish the work load to get there, you'll find your students will burnout much quicker, because they did not expect the workload requirement.

## Rising debaters – Noah and Ryan

For once a week during May and June, Zach traveled to Mercer Island to help two new debaters – Noah and Ryan – enter the world of speech and debate. The two brothers began their tutoring after their mother, Julie, reached out to Climb the Mountain expressing interest in the tangible benefits the activity offers, particularly in the areas of critical thinking and public speaking.

Both Noah and Ryan improved greatly in their abilities to construct and present persuasive arguments. Although Zach's schedule prevented a continuation of their sessions, he was impressed by the rapid growth of both debaters over the short period of time.

Zach enjoys tutoring students new to debate because he has the opportunity to experience the activity from a unique and fresh perspective. He remembers his pleasant surprise as they started the lesson.

At the start of our session, I asked the two to run through a mini-debate on whether cats or dogs are better. Among the humorous quips that only two siblings could offer, it was refreshing to see the enthusiasm that both brought to the debate, creating a fun learning environment that was encouraging to teach in. I was particularly impressed because both were surprised when their speaking time ended, wanting more time for more arguments!

Noah and Ryan debated other impromptu topics, making great progress in their debate abilities along the way. They watched and analyzed an entire Lincoln-Douglas debate, and reflected on the tactics debaters used to create advantages for themselves. Their next step is incorporating what they saw into their own speeches.

The two learned the process of preparing cases for Lincoln-Douglas debate competition. They are encountering a vast amount of new information while conducting their research, while simultaneously learning how to organize said information into persuasive arguments.

## Tutoring off the charts!

Zach's work with Noah and Ryan is just one of many, many tutoring opportunities Climb the Mountain has provided. Jim was so overwhelmed with tutoring requests this fall, he put out a call to high school coaches throughout Puget Sound to help! It is another sign that people are turning to Climb the Mountain for help they need for building up speech and debate skills.



Just some of the Climb Staff 2018!

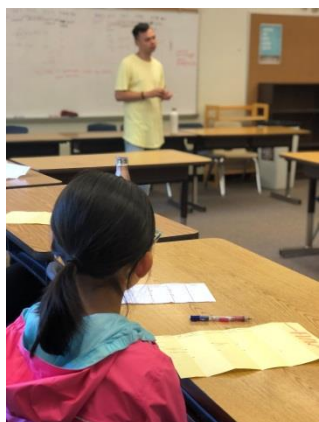
## My Climb – Zach’s Story

I had heard of Dr. Jim Hanson while competing at my first national tournament (in the novice division) hosted by Whitman College in 2010 – however, the first conversation that I remember with Jim was at the Whitman National Debate Institute two summers later, asking for his approval to perform a debate-inspired song at the camp tournament awards with two of my friends as “The 3NR.” While reluctant at first, he finally agreed (after making sure our lyrics were okayed) creating one of the most memorable debate camp experiences for my friends and me.

Fast forward to the end of summer 2017, following my graduation from the University of Washington. I was working as a lab leader and administrative assistant for Climb the Mountain’s summer institute at PLU, when Jim informed the staff at the camp of opportunities to join Climb outside of working at the camps. At that time, I was pursuing my teaching certificate, and was waiting for fall to take prerequisite classes to apply for UW’s teaching program. After learning more about the available positions, I became interested in an outreach role. Before teaching, I had considered it as a career pathway – so I applied. Seeing as I’m writing this article, Jim hired me! Since officially starting at the end of August 2017 and working into October 2018, this role has grown into an important position for Climb the Mountain as well as providing me with a plethora of opportunities to develop my professional skills and work toward my future career goals.



**The only picture Zach could find of himself at the WNDI 2012. At left is Andre Earls who worked at the first Climb the Mountain camp.**



I recall thinking that I would be limited in my work to solely outreach efforts. Jim and I met at a small café in the “U District” (near the University of Washington) to hash out my responsibilities and spend time getting work done. I am grateful for Jim’s flexibility in giving me more responsibilities. He guided me as I completed a variety of tasks including mailers, calling schools, and organizing contact databases to name a few. For example, I will always remember the time Jim showed me how to hide rows and columns in an excel spreadsheet and the value in doing so. I was attempting to reorganize data into a new sheet, but struggling because I had to continuously scroll to reach the data I needed. What I appreciate about working for Jim the most is the positivity that he brings to every situation. While this situation was pretty embarrassing for me, Jim turned it into a lighthearted teaching moment, and continues to do so as I go about completing tasks for Climb the Mountain.

Considering the growth I’ve achieved thus far, I am excited for more personal and professional development even though I am moving on to new opportunities now that I have graduated.

Jim noted:

Zach and I go back quite a few years and I cannot say enough good things about him. He has been there pretty much every step of the way as Climb has grown from its start in 2014 to a full set of programs today. Zach is an excellent teacher who shows real care for students. He also is really easy to work with. I’m sad he is moving on (to pursue his career goals!) but I’m very, very appreciative of everything he did for me and for Climb the Mountain. Zach, from the heart, thank you so much. Keep in touch and I wish you the very best! Plus, yes, you can still do online judging! : )



## January through June 2018 in Review . . .



Climb highlights from the first half of the year!

- 1. Worked with BC Academy providing instruction in public forum debate leading to 7 of 7 teams winning awards at Stanford University.
- 2. Held a clinic for the Bush School in Seattle providing practice debates with feedback.
- 3. Tutored two high school students in Bellevue.
- 4. Tutored three middle school students in Bellevue who went on to an undefeated preliminary record at a Seattle University middle school tournament.
- 5. Held three online tournaments for college students including our biggest one yet.
- 6. Provided feedback and insight for future development of the online debating platform.
- 7. Held two clinics for Maywood middle school providing instruction in debate.
- 8. Judged finals at the NCFWA state championship in Lincoln-Douglas debate.
- 9. Established plans for the Summer 2018 Climb Camps (which were a big success—details in our next newsletter).
- 10. Met with Elementary students at Microsoft laying the foundation for speech and debate training for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders.
- 11. Did updates to the Climb web pages.
- 12. Referred multiple students to Climb tutors.
- 13. Laid out plans to begin afterschool speech and debate programs for middle schoolers.
- 14. Transitioned accounting completely to Jared Phillips, our Chief Executive Officer.
- 15. Met with Puget Sound middle school coaches to begin hosting tournaments at Seattle University.
- 16. Tutored students on Mercer Island.
- 17. Answered dozens of emails asking questions about speech and debate.
- 18. Assisted coaches in finding judges for tournaments.
- 19. Continued outreach to schools to begin programs.
- 20. Updated the national speech and debate contact list.

**In our next Newsletter for the 2018-19 year, we will tell you about our latest support for speech and debate.**

**To get the latest news, be sure to check our Facebook page:**

**<https://www.facebook.com/groups/258436737697090/>**

**We are climbing with your help and support!**

## Contribute to the Climb!

For anyone interested in helping us continue our mission, please visit <https://www.climbthemountain.us/support-us> to donate a gift of money or your time.

## Donors keep us Climbing!

We are incredibly grateful for the support of so many people. People have donated money. People have donated their time. People have reached out to others to bring them into the world of speech and debate. We thank everyone for their efforts including these donors below (donations from December 2017 to December 2018). *Did we miss you? We are very sorry for the omission and we want to correct it! Please email Jim at [jim@climbthemountain.us](mailto:jim@climbthemountain.us) and tell him. :)*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Char Main Chris Dunlap</b></li><li>• <b>David and Shari Barsky</b></li><li>• <b>Jared Phillips and Loan Lam</b></li><li>• <b>Jim Hanson</b></li><li>• <b>Megan Salzman Medica (The Salzman-Medica Family Fund)</b></li><li>• <b>Michael Bartanen</b></li><li>• <b>Rowland Hobbs and Angelo Boccia Cedeño</b></li></ul> <p>Thank you to these volunteers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Mike Bartanen</b></li><li>• <b>Ronna Liggett</b></li><li>• <b>And to all of the people that have helped our community grow!</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>With thanks to the National Speech and Debate Association for providing grants for a big question tournament where over 20 people participated!</b></li><li>• <b>With thanks to Matt Fraser and Education Unlimited for purchasing advertising on our web pages which helps us fund our projects to grow speech and debate!</b></li><li>• <b>With thanks to the Voices Foundation for helping provide scholarships for students attending our high school camp.</b></li></ul>
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[Click here to donate and make a difference](#)

## We are climbing the mountain!

