



**Debate.
Grow.
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Lead.**

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Massey & Gail School Sponsorship Pritzker College Prep 2019-2020 Report



The School: Pritzker College Prep is a public four-year charter High School located in the Hermosa neighborhood in Chicago, Illinois. The school serves over 700 students; 42% of them are low-income. For two years, Pritzker's Debate team competed in our Maroon Conference and won back-to-back championships both years. This year, thanks to the school sponsorship from Massey & Gail, Pritzker College Prep joined our Blue Conference where they faced much tougher competition with teams that have competed nationally, one of which is coached by last season's National Coach of the Year and another of which won the Varsity finals round this season in a joint competition against the RCC (Chicago Debates' most competitive conference).

Students:

- Twenty-two (22) students competed at three or more weekend tournaments this year (12 girls, 10 boys).
- The Pritzker debaters have an average unweighted cumulative GPA above 3.3
- Without exception, the Pritzker debaters report that their participation on the Debate Team has dramatically improved their abilities to read challenging texts, write and speak cogently, think strategically, and coach their classmates on how to formulate arguments.
- Beyond academic skills, the Pritzker Debaters report a rise in confidence and an increase in willingness to speak up in class.
- The Pritzker Debaters seek out and support each other between debates, they attend each other's elimination rounds, and, on the bus each night returning from a tournament, every debater gives at least one shout-out, ensuring no one goes unappreciated.

League Competition:

- As mentioned above, this year, Pritzker competed in our Blue Conference. The switch from the Maroon conference into the Blue Conference presented a tremendous challenge as the competition became much stiffer. However, Pritzker rose to the challenge and proved to be worthy competitors.
- Most impressively, in Tournament 3, a joint tournament between our Blue Conference and our RCC, all 22 of Pritzker's Debaters Recorded wins against Nationally Competitive Teams.
- Notably, Pritzker earned seven wins against five different RCC schools.
- Juniors Dawn Payne and Jaylene Llamas finished 3rd in prelims among Blue Conference teams and in the top 20 overall in Novice as they qualified for the City Championship.
- Senior Bryan Zumba and junior Fatima Garcia, who competed alone for multiple rounds against teams of two, joined Ms. Payne and Ms. Llamas as one of only six Blue Conference squads in the top 25.
- Sophomores Jorge Velazquez and Josue Martinez and sophomore Faviana Bazan and freshman Arlyss Garcia were also among top-10 Blue Conference Novice finishers. Mr. Martinez was the 20th ranked speaker among all 88 Novice debaters and 3rd among Novice Blue Conference competitors while Ms. Bazan was 26th overall, or 5th in Blue; Mr. Velazquez 30th, or 7th in Blue; and Ms. Payne 33rd, or 9th in Blue.

- In Varsity, seniors Lizette Benavides and Denise Jimenez finished 7th in prelims among Blue Conference competitors. Ms. Benavides was also the 15th ranked Varsity speaker among all 82 Varsity competitors and the 5th ranked Varsity speaker within the Blue Conference while Ms. Jimenez was 17th overall and 6th in Blue.
- Also competing in Varsity, seniors Maria Ramirez and Emily Pereznegron toppled two teams, including one from the RCC, while junior Gregorio Chavez and senior Joseph Martinez defeated an RCC squad and senior Gissele Pacheco and junior Emiliano Torres defeated two Blue Conference teams.
- In Novice, sophomores Jose Pacheco and Adamaris Cazares defeated RCC and Blue Conference opponents while freshmen Ivette Juarez and Julian Olmedo and junior Carlos Espinoza and sophomore Lizeth Castillo each defeated a Blue Conference team.

The team's accomplishments this year were remarkable, especially for a team competing in a new and more competitive division for the first time. We are so proud of the dedication of the Pritzker Debate team and the depth of their commitment to the activity.

Student Testimonials:

Testimony from Maria Ramirez, senior co-captain who is headed to St. Olaf College as a Posse Scholar:

Looking back on my experience in debate as a senior, I see I gained skills that helped me succeed, not only in the debate room, but will also help me in college and beyond. After many highs and lows, I came to understand the importance that resilience has on individual growth. As a passionate debater, it was easy for a bad round at a tournament to bring me down for the remainder of the day. I took the small, bad moments to the heart; however, taking roles of leadership on my team taught me otherwise. As someone who is responsible for my teammates' growth, I quickly learned one cannot simply stay down in the face of adversity. The same passion that brought me down is what gave me resilience. In and out of the debate room, I came to understand that empathy and maturity are cultivated by the failures we face. The lessons I've gained from being a debater, teammate, Director of Education, and captain are endless. Above all, the qualities these roles helped me develop allow me to not only complete my responsibilities successfully as a leader in the team but also become a better version of myself. I look forward to bringing these qualities to college with me, where I will continue to grow into a better version of myself.

Testimony from Emily Pereznegron, senior co-captain who is headed to Pomona College as a Posse Scholar:

As I read a new argument, I could feel my heart racing and my palms sweating. It was as if my mind signaled my body to start moving as my brain was infused with new information. This was the feeling I would get any time a debate round would begin. This excitement and passion is the reason why I spent my Tuesdays and Thursdays in debate team practices. The Debate Team brought my two passions of learning and conquering academic challenges together. It is where I embraced my most authentic self by expressing my opinion on government policies. It is also

where I received an array of education: in just three years, I learned about policies on legal immigration, funding regulations of elementary and secondary education, and the sales of weapons with other nations. Learning and discussing topics like these with a group of peers who were equally as invested in learning as myself is the reason why I am determined to continue debating in college. Beyond that, the debate team is the reason why I am attending college and majoring in Political Science. Through this team, I was introduced to politics and understood their impact in the real world, and I am now continuing on this journey of learning.

Testimony from Emiliano Torres, junior debater:

Being a debater has completely changed the way I approach things. For one, debate has made me much more confident and I tend to approach new things now without having second thoughts because that's generally how I do my speeches. Once the time starts, there is no 2nd guessing what you are reading, you just do it. Debate has given me the skills to have more critical thoughts in today's world, which has helped me a lot from reading online to taking tests in the classroom. Because of debate, I don't just take what people say on TV, I analyze what they say and I have a deeper understanding of what goes on in our country. Debate has also opened my eyes, even more. Every year I've been in debate, I learn a lot more on a specific topic such as my first year which was about immigration. You can't be a debater and not learn something new.

CPS Strike: In October 2019, Chicago Public schools experienced a two-week strike. As a result, Chicago Debates was forced to cancel five tournaments. As a result, The Pritzker debate team missed out on crucial recruitment opportunities to grow their team and two-weeks of debate practices. Even with this minor setback at the beginning of the debate season, Pritzker was able to resume debate practices, add new members, and excel at the remaining tournaments.

Chicago Debates Response To Covid-19: COVID-19, has drastically disrupted life for each of us and Illinois schools closed to in-person learning in March for the remainder of the year. It's at a time like this that the educational opportunity gap that Chicago Debates is working to bridge is most evident. Where our students have missed valuable classroom learning and weeks away from their education, many of their suburban peers have not. We applaud CPS and their quick efforts to introduce remote learning. We stand alongside them in doing what we always do to supplement students' education.

Across the nation, students were forced to virtually complete their school year and forego all extracurricular activities, whether academic or athletic, leaving them devastated. After hosting 32 tournaments this year, we ended our high school season prematurely cancelling the last few high school events, including the debate City Championship. We normally end our debate season in early April and spend the spring and summer preparing for the next one, which begins in October. However, recognizing that students love and miss debate and were unable to showcase their learning at the City Championship, we are bringing debate to them virtually throughout the spring and summer!

While virtual debate activities will be fun and enjoyable for students, it's so much more than that. [Debate is proven to positively impact student engagement, learning, and academic outcomes while building socioemotional, leadership, and life skills.](#) With the limitations of remote learning, debate is now even more important. Virtual debate activities will supplement remote learning and continue to push students to research, read and synthesize information, think critically, collaborate with peers and coaches, and learn about public policy issues that affect them and their communities. Virtual activities have included: an End of the Year Award Ceremony, which hosted nearly 90 attendees and recognized our Debater and Coach of the year, five "webisodes" on debate, including introducing our early research on the upcoming year's debate topic around Criminal Justice Reform, and a virtual speech contest. In the coming weeks, we will launch demo debates and expert guest lectures on Criminal Justice Reform. Additionally, we are in the planning process with CPS to virtually host our annual summer debate camp.

Unfortunately, we had to reschedule our annual fundraiser from June to September, which drastically impacted our ability to meet our budget for the year. While none of us know the complete impact COVID-19 will have on our economy, we do anticipate challenges in fundraising over the next year. But, we are working diligently on solutions, alternatives, and strategies to innovate on our work in order to adapt, evolve, and survive!

Conclusion: We are thankful to Massey & Gail for providing a school sponsorship for Pritzker College Preparatory. By supporting debate at Pritzker, Massey & Gail is making a tremendous difference for the up and coming debaters at the school.







