

# Editorial: Bozeman's speech and debate dynasty continues

- By the Chronicle Editorial Board
- Jul 6, 2021

If any extracurricular activity at Bozeman High School would qualify as a competitive dynasty, it would have to be speech and debate. Participating students have been dominant among state and regional programs for decades. And this past year was no exception.

The Bozeman team went undefeated and took home a state championship — one of many in program history. But then they topped that by finishing in 13th place in a national competition. That's an astonishing feat in field of more than 1,300 schools from 48 states and five nations.

As far as anyone can recall, that's the best a Montana school has ever finished.

The program also garnered two team prizes, Speech School of Excellence and Debate School of Honor, in the mid-June competition. The event was conducted virtually for the second year in a row due to concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic. But that didn't faze the local kids. Thirty-one local competitors qualified for the nationals, also a record high for Montana in recent memory. And six finished in the top 30 — a truly amazing accomplishment.

In its first year of competition, four students from the Gallatin High speech and debate team went to nationals, showing great promise for that program as well.

To their great credit, Bozeman educators have long placed great importance on excellence in speech and debate. This is an activity that

doesn't draw big enthusiastic crowds that buy tickets and donate big bucks, like football and basketball. But consider: Speech and debate participants are acquiring skills that will be key to success later in life. The ability to express one's views articulately is essential to all professions, whether it be law, politics, sales, education or even medicine, to name just a few. And the powers of persuasion are key to attaining leadership positions in all organizations. Through success in speech and debate competition, students become well versed in these critical skills.

Athletes hone physical skills when they participate in interscholastic sports. And while that's certainly important, the vast majority of students will not participate in organized sports beyond their high school years.

Congratulations are extended to all local speech and debate team members. And may your tradition of success continue.