

THE ART OF ARGUMENTATION

Speech and Debaters have arguing down to a science

Megan McCormack | Staff Writer

Some Mason High School students are taking arguments to new level. Not only can these students debate under pressure with professionalism in a tournament setting as a part of the Speech and Debate team, but according to senior Wei Sun, they can also develop strategies that help them in and outside the classroom.

Although she is well versed in debating in a professional manner, Sun said that the skills she learns in debate apply to some classes she's taken here at MHS.

"It's so applicable, especially in

classes.

For example,

AP Comp...we

would have debates. It's

really easy to come up with

arguments now that we do it on a normal basis," Sun said. "We do it three times a week and then on weekends as well, so it really helps me in class."

Senior Nikita Nambiar, also a speech and debate member, says that her arguing skills have not only helped her in class, but she knows that she will use them later in life.

"It helps a lot in classes because you're more comfortable with getting up and speaking, and I know in jobs, too, if I ever had to do something like that, I would be really comfortable with doing it instead of being really intimidated and shy," Nambiar said.

While she can utilize her argument skills in class, Sun said that one of the most important things to remember in the middle of an argument is to not get lost in your own thoughts.

"You just have to remember what you're thinking," Sun said. "You just have to follow your thought process and you have to have confidence in what you're saying or else...no one's going to find you credible. So you really have to think [through] your argument before you go up there and tell other people."

According to Speech and Debate team advisor Melissa Donahue, being successful in an argument lies within knowing the topic you're arguing about and knowing it well.

"I would say just having a solid grasp of the topic [is really important to being successful]," Donahue said. "[You need to know] the debate resolution inside and out, [be] familiar with evidence that is going to back up that debate resolution, because once you get into that debate and your opponents throw something at you that you've never heard before, it's next to impossible to counter those arguments."

Donahue said that before you begin an argument, you have to think through the topic fully and be able to approach both sides of the arguments.

"The big thing is starting to do brainstorming on the topic, thinking about how you are going to approach the resolution from the affirmative side, from the negative side, doing a lot of brainstorming early on and then from there really the tips and suggestions are step-by-step to get through case construction," Donahue said.

Nambiar said that to successfully win an argument, you have to consider how to extend your argument while also deconstructing the other person's.

"You basically have to strengthen your own case while at the same time taking down your opponent's case contention by contention," Nambiar said. "You go through them logically and explain why you put them down."

According to Sun, thinking quickly yet efficiently has helped her argue well.

"You just have to be really logical and think things through. You have to weigh the impact and the probability of something happening and then, practicality if you're talking about implementing something," Sun said. "You really just have to think about what you're going to say before you say it because if you say something wrong,

the other team is going to get you for that."

For her to argue successfully Nambiar said that she has to learn to speak quickly while educating your opponent and tearing their argument down simultaneously.

"[You need to work on] speed and talking and actually make sense," Nambiar said. "You have to be able to educate them and prove...that your side is stronger than [their's]. ... You address things with knowledge. You have to prove your point with concrete support, and public speaking [skills] are important."

Nambiar said that being able to construct and argument and prove it will be present in all aspects of life.

"In any kind of situation that you're trying to prove a point, you have to be able to support; that's just going to hold true wherever you are," Nambiar said.

Donahue said that arguing has its place in everyday life and will help people get jobs in the future.

"Those skills are going to carry over to all facets of life: the skills regarding critical thinking...refuting and offering a way in which to encounter evidence," Donahue said. "Being able to communicate, being able to think critically, it's probably some of the most important things that employers are looking for."

Although she has the skills and techniques to argue well, Sun also said she has also learned to speak up for her beliefs which will help her beyond professional and classroom settings.

"It's more than just arguing, it encompasses so much," Sun said. "Not only just general knowledge about politics and current events, but it also helps you speak out and not be afraid to stand up for what you believe in and what your argument is. I know this is going to carry on for the rest of my life."

