



2021 NEWSLETTER

Vol. 6, 2020-2021

Welcome to the 2021 Climb Newsletter covering the past year of events.

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 Natalie Neumeier who put together the initial draft of this newsletter and to all the participants that shared their experiences.

We have experienced explosive growth this year! We really took off!

Enjoy and please feel free to contact me, Jim Hanson at jim@climbthemountain.us with ideas, edits, omissions, thoughts, etc.

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Climb announces major new program!

Jim Hanson announced in early Summer 2021 that Climb the Mountain will begin a high school afterschool program. This will finally give students who are at the many high schools without programs in Washington state the opportunity to participate in speech and debate including tournaments. We will provide an update in our next newsletter and also our Facebook page!

Why are people choosing Climb the Mountain?

We're proud of our programs. Climb the Mountain teaches students the fundamentals of speech and debate. Even though the program has been running exclusively online for over a year, students and parents are still making connections with each other through the power of debate. This past spring, Climb gave over 400 students the chance to refine their debate skills. Our online program offers students the chance to get to know their peers with lots of interaction and face time.

Our students this past spring were able to find their voices-learning how to speak better and argue effectively. At the end of our sessions when many students gave their coaches feedback, they thanked them for helping them find confidence in their speaking voices. Students learned skills from debate they can apply to their everyday lives. Students shared interests, such as debate, but also working with peers who are smart, engaged, and ready to speak! At the end of our middle school afterschool program, students participate in the Seattle University middle school tournament. Our elementary students do a tournament during the last four classes and they love it! These culminating experiences give a chance to shine.

For our parents, Climb the Mountain is a great chance for their kids to gain skills of communication while parents can have a bit of a break. We have an amazing arrangement of staff and coaches who make sure our young minds receive the best experience possible. We have check ins and outs to make sure they aren't lost in a random breakout room. If a student needs extra help, our staff does its best. Our coaches want to see the campers find the same joy they have for debate.

Climb the Mountain is giving hundreds of kids the chance to find their voice! Debate is such an important skill for all ages and we are giving students that opportunity.



Meet New Climb Board Member Jason Smith!

What do you like most about what Climb the Mountain does?

For me it's about providing opportunities for youth to engage in speech and debate, when that opportunity may not have been available in their schools

What do you remember about Jim as a coach?

Ha, where do I start? I first met Jim when I was a senior in high school. I would then have Jim as my college debate coach at Whitman for the next four years. A few things that have always stood out to me about Jim. First, he is one of the most caring people I have known. He was one of the people that made my freshman year at college bearable when I wasn't sure if Whitman was the right place for me. He was also there for me my senior year when I felt devastated after being eliminated from nationals. Jim is also one of the funniest people I have known, and half the time I don't think he is even trying to be funny.



Jason is a community outreach administrator for the City of Marysville

How has debate helped you in your life?

Debate gave me the ability to think about issues quickly and share that information with others in a clear and concise way. I have used this skill in all my jobs from Marine officer in Iraq to my current job as a training and community outreach administrator for the City of Marysville. I generally tell people that the ability to speak is the ability to influence, and debate only makes you better at it. Debate has also given me the confidence to not be afraid to have difficult conversations. Often people sit on the sideline because they are not sure what to say or they are afraid they won't have the right answer. Through debate I learned to listen to different points of view, process information critically and provide meaningful responses.

What is one piece of advice you would give new debaters?

Never underestimate how much you will learn.

What is your favorite debate story?

The first time I went to parli debate nationals in college, my debate partner's luggage got lost on our flight down to Houston. So he had to wear what he flew in. This guy was always a great dresser, and it drove him crazy. I remember telling him that it doesn't matter and it's not like anyone is going to really notice. After our first round (which was a disaster because the topic was horrible, we essentially argued that we don't need the FBI, but that is a totally different story), he was able to get his luggage so he changed into his proper clothes. We thought nothing of it until we saw our ballots after the tournament. The judge in the first round wrote in huge letters, "did you sleep in your clothes? Come on man, this is nationals, get an iron or something." I guess I was wrong. People did notice. We laughed pretty hard at that.

What has been your most challenging debate?

Freshman year, Whitman brought freshmen to tournaments that most colleges did not. This was a chance for us to learn. My partner and I in our first match end up going against a highly ranked senior team. That was bad enough, what made it worse is that we had prepared some premade briefs that we were going to use, and the judge started off by saying, "I hate premade briefs...so I hope none of you plan on using them." The last thing that made it so painful was the speed of the debate. This was a CEDA tournament, and it was just ridiculous. At some point during my first speech, I started laughing and said something like, "well I only caught about 10% of that, so let me start with that." I will say that the other team ended up being pretty cool to us.

To the left, Jason speaks at an event when he was in college.

Debate with Board Member Rowland Hobbs

What do you like most about what Climb the Mountain does?

Community. Climb! isn't just about communications skills, and building confidence, it is a community focused on giving back and helping everyone achieve the best they can, learn, and have a pretty amazing time as they do it. The Community, and mission, inspire me.

What do you remember about Jim as a coach?

Zingies. And laughing. Zsa Zsa! And more laughing. Jim taught me so much, it is hard to put down in words the one thing. That's ironic as he was teaching me how to communicate. But, honestly, Jim taught me to take something I really loved and took very seriously -- competitive debate -- and be light hearted with it. That sense of humor, and lightness, has helped me be a better communicator, and a better person, for a long time since.



Rowland is currently CEO and Co-founder of Stake, providing return on rent.

How has debate helped you in your life?

The obvious answer would be communicating. But, actually, it was problem solving, thinking, and learning to enjoy the camaraderie winning or losing.

What is one piece of advice you would give new debaters?

There are always three summary points at the top of your 2AR, uniqueness (or non-uniqueness!) arguments won't win you squat, and someone always has better evidence than you, just be a little more engaging, show-up, and you'll do just fine.

What is your favorite debate story?

Leaving Kansas City with the back of the van open only to discover, back in Walla Walla -- a few airplanes and vans later -- that many suitcases had fallen out on the Kansas City highway. We can laugh about it now . . .



Rowland at one of his first college tournaments.

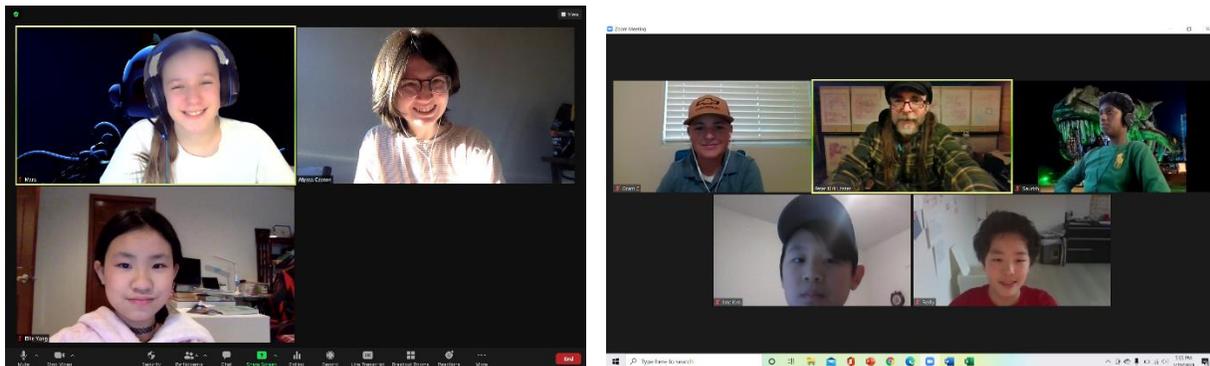
What has been your most challenging debate?

With the leftovers in the refrigerator.

Kids say the darndest things

Debate doesn't always have to be serious, this past spring we've shared a lot of funny moments together. Our students were able to bring their bright and shining personalities to debate joking around with both their peers and coaches. This past spring, one topic our campers worked on was debating about electric cars vs. gas cars. Coach Mia Harris shares a comment a student made after a debate to another student:

"No one drives 500 miles! Why would you drive across the whole United States for fun?!? 500 miles is like here all the way to Florida."



In another debate on the metric system, a student made a more serious point but perhaps a bit exaggerated (definitely creative):

"If we switch to the metric system we will follow what Great Britain does. This will remind us of the bloodshed the Colonies experienced."

Thanks debaters for your energy and unique points. Thanks for keeping things lighthearted, adding some extra fun is never a problem in Climb the Mountain debate!

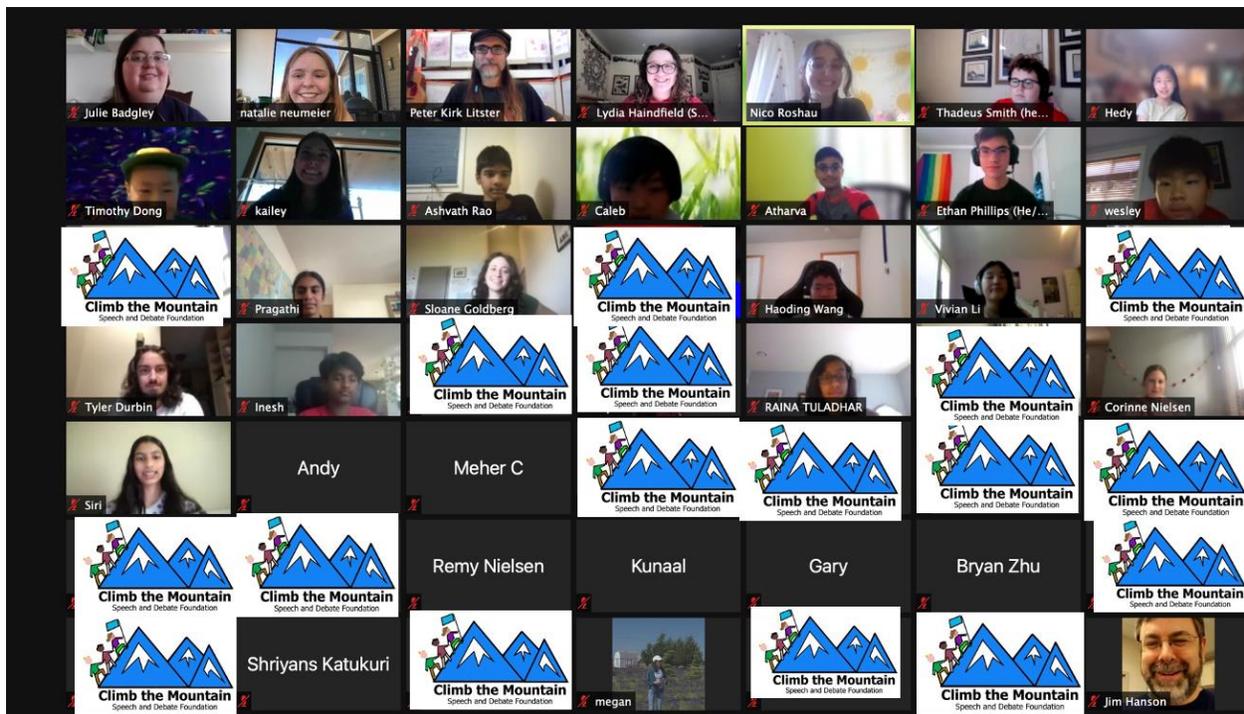
Our climbers this past spring were able to show up with positive energy, ready to make connections with both their peers and coaches. Our students were able to come full circle for them as they often had the same judge the first week and the last week. Judge Ethan Phillips shares a heartwarming story of his debater's positive energy:

"Awesome! Judging some of the kids I taught through the first few weeks, they were really happy to have me judge and give them awards. They were like Ethan!!!!!! And super excited to have me judge them!"

It really adds true joy when we see our debaters start to make connections with other campers and form friendships. Debate is a great place for students to find peers with the same interests and make lifelong friendships. Staff member Natalie Neumeier shares her experience of watching debaters make connections with each other,

"This past spring, I had the chance to watch students over the course of a few months and watch students' bond and get to know each other. Many partners stuck together throughout the entire program, debating a wide arrangement of topics together. I know many of these students will continue to be in more Climb programs together, making lifelong memories!"

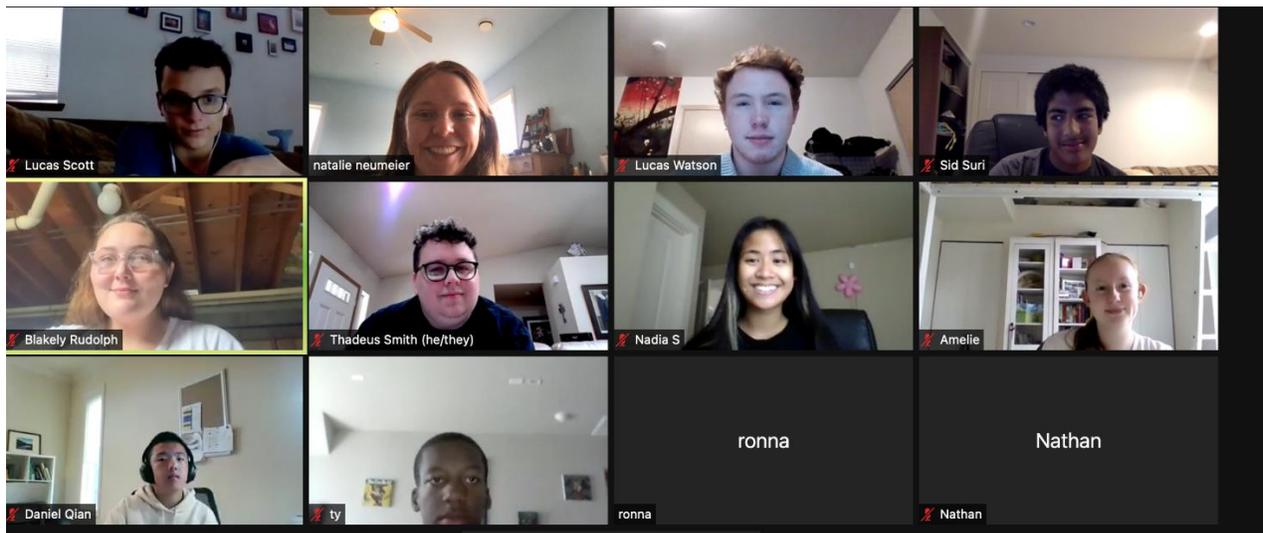
Thanks to all our debaters who brought their positive energy into Climb the Mountain debate this year. Your excitement means a lot to all the coaches and staff working hard to make sure you succeeded. Everyone at Climb the Mountain is happy to watch you have a great time!



Let's Zoom!

Just like everyone around the world this past year, we here at Climb the Mountain have adapted to using the platform of Zoom. (We used both Yaatly and Zoom this year) Through breakout rooms, microphones, cameras, and the chat we've gotten pretty good at using the platform. Our camper's ability to navigate Zoom this past spring has been very impressive and we wanted to let our debaters know how proud of them we are for adapting! **It is pretty amazing how good Elementary and Middle School students have become with this technology.** The difference between now and when the pandemic set in is very dramatic.

One feature our students enjoyed over Zoom was the chat, where they had the chance to make additional positive comments to their peers without having to awkwardly stop them. During our awards at the end of each of our programs, campers used the chats to congratulate their peers and thank their coaches. It was a small and simple gesture, but it really brought our students together. One word our debaters used this past spring was *Poggers*, which after a quick google search, means "awesome." Our students used the term to encourage their peers and feel excitement when they won awards. Great job students for staying involved and so positive through the chat!

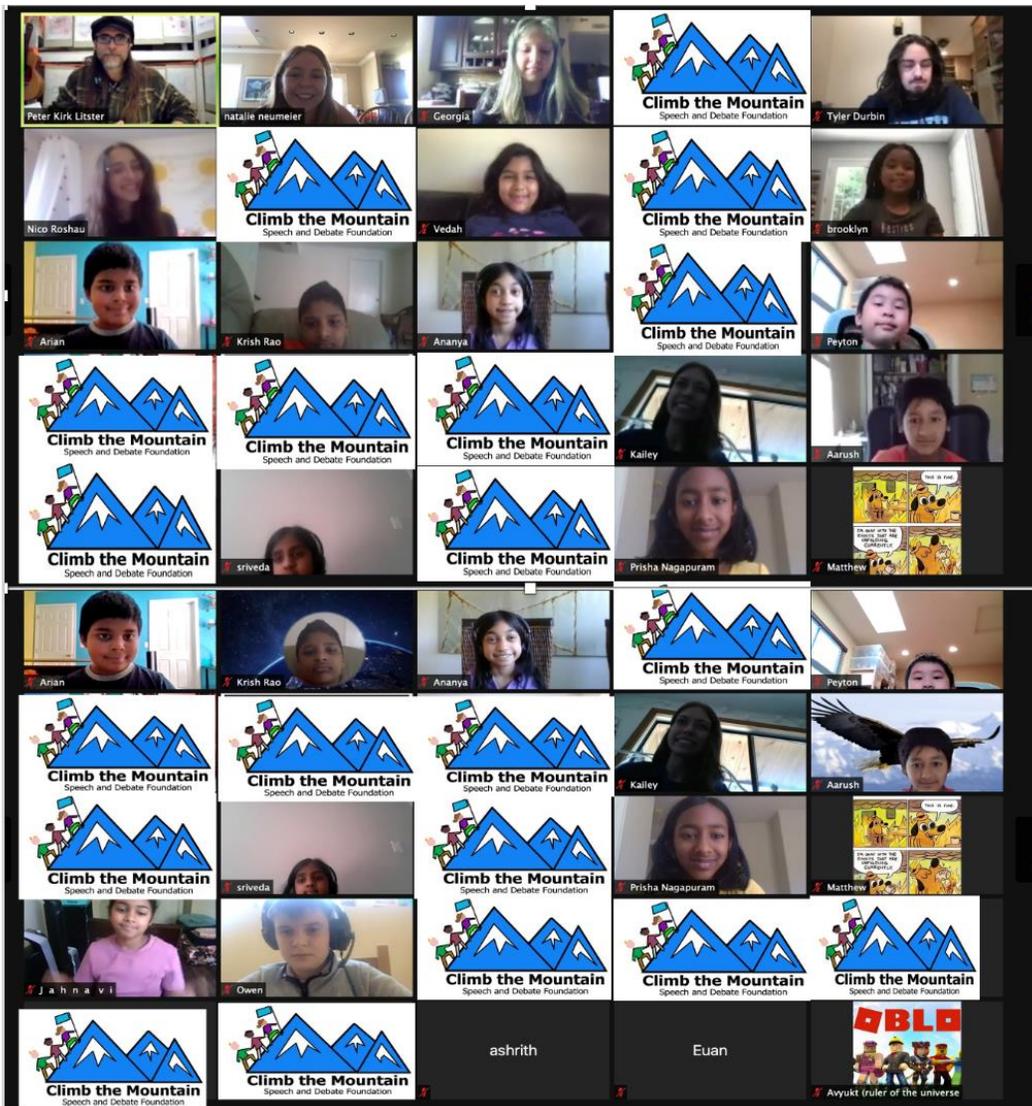


Still, technology was not our friend at all times. While not common, we experienced students with broken cameras and microphones to internet cutting out in the middle of a speech! Behind fixing every technology experience was Climb's very own Jim Hanson! Although sometimes he would experience frustration- muttering a

few *oh dear's* :) here and there, Jim was able to help nearly all campers who needed help. He took the time and did everything in his power to get every camper back online. Thanks for all your help Jim!

Even when Zoom cuts out on us, we don't let that stop us! When one camper's microphone and camera stopped working, instead of just quitting, we got the student to call the judge via cellphone and they made their speech just as if they were in Zoom. Thanks for adapting campers, you are the best!

We here at Climb the Mountain will continue to be online through at least the end of fall 2021, making sure every student can have the opportunity to debate! Thanks to all our staff, campers, and parents for being so flexible with online debating this year!



Climb's big Climb!

It's no secret debating through a pandemic has been challenging, especially when it's all online! Our debaters this spring faced lots of obstacles when it came to debating online, but nonetheless they were able to persevere. Staff member Blakey Rudolph shares a story on her excitement of watching her debaters succeed,

"When we had the pharmaceutical industry topic, I was waiting for someone to make an argument that I had been waiting to hear the entire program. And when someone finally made it, I swear I was behind the computer screen cheering and waving my arms because it's so exciting to see the kid's knowledge on different topics grow and see how much more in depth their arguments get as time passes."

It's so rewarding to see both our debate students and staff make the best out of debating online and continue to grow in their debate skills!



This past spring Climb debate saw a big jump in students registering for the program. In the fall of 2020, we had a major bump from our previous 40 to 80 kids to 200 and by the spring, with the word out, we hit over 400 students! What a

jump! It was so awesome to see the kids continue to be interested and engaged in debating.

Jim has heard from many parents about how much their kids love debating.

The kids this spring showed a true passion for debate. Staff member Yanti Sansui shares a story of watching her debaters step up to the plate,

"Sometimes in debate we have an absence or tech issues. There are times when a debater is left without a partner. One student stepped up and debated twice in two hours with two different partners, giving four speeches and four crossfires (question and answer). That student made the debates possible and showed incredible initiative and teamwork."

Even when things got a little bit twisted, the kids took charge of debate! They were able to make it work despite all the obstacles thrown in their face. The climb kids this year demonstrated amazing skills it regards to both debate and maturity. Great job students!

Climb's VERY Big Numbers!

This is a now unfortunate but common message on our site—we are getting huge numbers of kids—so many, we can't take them all.

Important Note: Wed Elementary and Middle School Classes nearing capacity.

750 students have joined our programs this year.

Students who join our program develop self-confidence, thinking skills, and have fun communicating about important issues. Students work with other motivated, smart kids. They learn to express themselves.

While being online means we have all the rooms we need—it does not mean we have all the staff we need. Jim had to cap classes in the spring along with adding a new day of instruction when we hit 400 students. Jim also had to make the Seattle University tournament split in two—he couldn't get enough judges—and even struggled with only half the teams on Saturday and half on Sunday. Jim is working on expanding our hiring but we want qualified, excellent staff!

Seattle University Middle School Tournament!

Climb middle schoolers get the opportunity to participate in the Seattle University debate tournament held five weekends during the year. The tournament ran both Saturday and Sunday in the spring, around six hours each day (we did two separate days because we could not get enough judges to run the debates all at the same time). The middle school climb students showed off their debate skills they had spent the past few months perfecting. Staff member Natalie Neumeier shares her experience of working behind the scenes at the middle school tournament,

"It was so impressive watching the students debate such challenging topics at the middle school tournament this year. They were able to move from breakout room to breakout room, debating with their partners (a few of them even debating on their own!), and asking questions of their opposing team. The kids were able to take on the challenge of debate and really show their impressive skills! This was my first year working with Climb, and I was blown away with the kids' dedication to debate. The Climb kids demonstrated strong skills; these kids are really extraordinary!"

Tournaments can be a scary experience, but the climb kids this year took the challenge head on and did an amazing job! The climb kids excelled greatly at the Seattle University Middle School Tournament this year- winning a wide arrangement of awards.



Brandon Luo and Dylan DeLeon (photo from their first year in our program) placed 1st at the Seattle U Tournament in Experienced Division going 4-0, winning semis and finals and taking 1st and 2nd speaker!

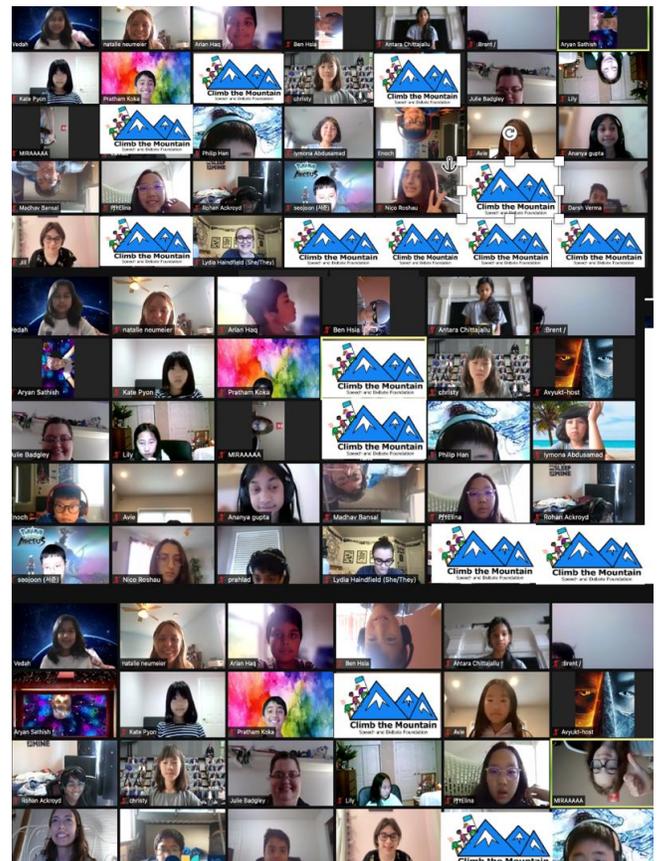
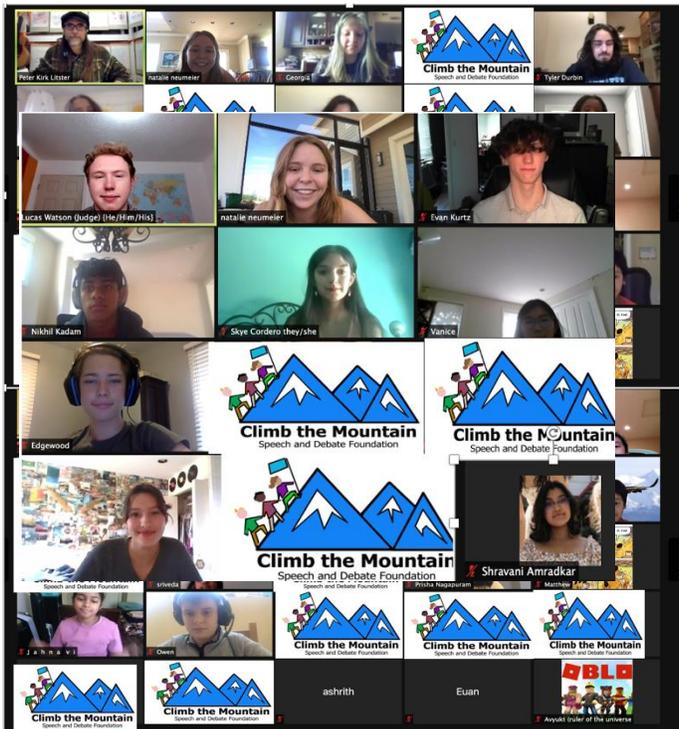
Climb teams won dozens of awards including multiple first places. They put in a great amount of time preparing for the tournament and all their hard work paid off. Thank you to all our climb students who participated in the Seattle University middle school tournament this year. All your effort is greatly appreciated!

Climb the Mountain 2021 Summer Camps

This summer Climb the Mountain had the honor of hosting not one, but two amazing summer debate programs! The programs ran for one week in July and also August- available to both new and experienced debaters. Climb the Mountain had students in elementary, middle, and high school.

For our students who are just starting debate, this summer program offers a wide range of lessons for the students to learn the inner workings of debate. There are lessons such as learning to flow, using question/answer in debate, impacts, impromptu debates, etc. For our students who have experience in debate, we offer advanced lessons on techniques for persuading the judge, strategic questions, impact calculus, and logical fallacies.

Students had time with the coach and other students, spending lots of time on debate lessons. Zoom gave the Climb staff the chance to utilize breakout rooms, shared screen function, etc. We couldn't have done it without the amazing student's participation, help from the parents, and of course our Climb the mountain staff who were always ready to help students learn.



Climb Debaters Success

It has been so rewarding to see our Climb students grow at our camp this summer, in just five days their skills grew an immense amount. At the end of our programs, we like to ask the students what their favorite part of debate program was. One student noted,

"One useful skill I've learned, is being able to convince my parents to buy me stuff"



You know what, that works! Pretty awesome to see our students getting creative with the skills they learned in camp this week. At the end of our camp sessions this week, we held an award ceremony to honor our students for their awesome work.

Some of these mentions range from . . . *"Rad Refuter"* to *"Quick Impacts"*

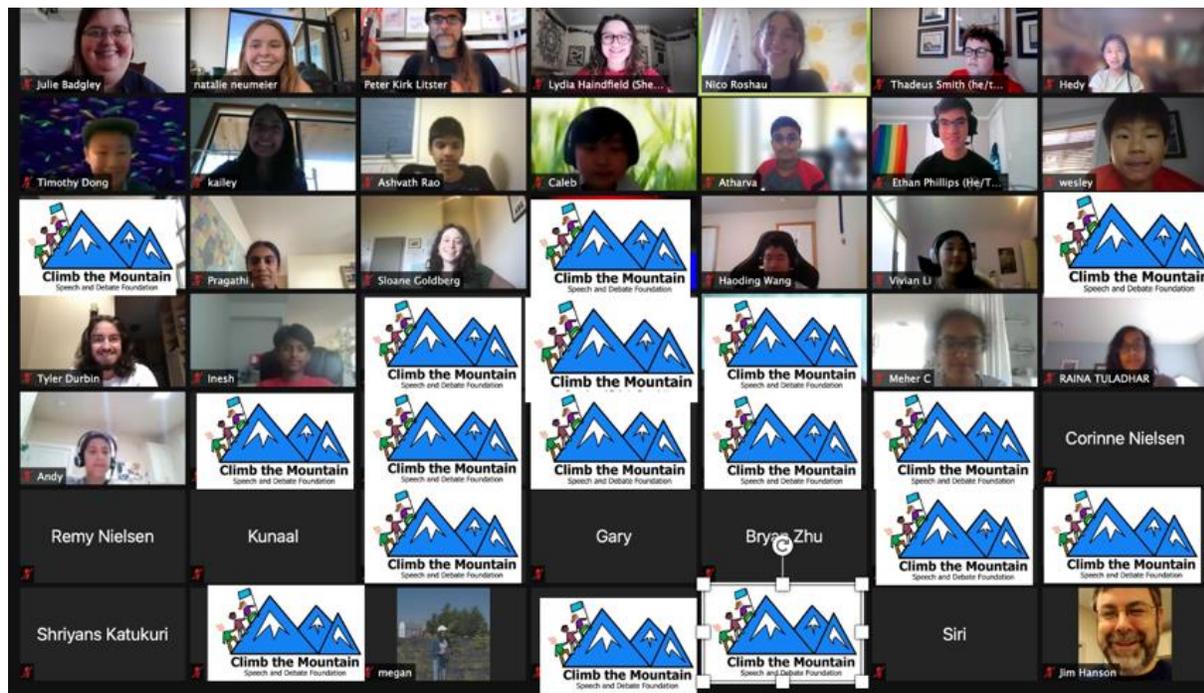
We here at Climb want to make sure each student gets recognized for their hard work! Our students make a great amount of progress in only one week. They start with either no experience or some experience and by the end of the week, they are debating like professionals.

As well as each student getting recognized for individual awards, students also receive awards based on the speaker points and wins they earned in their debates. Special thanks to Aurorae Young Academy (Bellevue WA) and BC Academy (Langley BC) for coming in and debating with our Climb students. At the award ceremony students, get recognized in front of both their peers and staff for all the hard work they did this week. Great job students! We are so proud of your success!!

Impromptu Debate: Vampires are scarier than Werewolves

During our Thursday afternoon practice debates, our middle school debaters were working on practicing impromptu debate skills, which means they do not get to research that topic before the day of their debate. As you know, Climb likes students to address current issues but every so often, we throw in in a fund topic. So we decided to start off with a nice simple topic:

"Vampires are scarier than werewolves."



Our middle school students reacted enthusiastically and with great creativity! They came up with fun arguments for these debates. Our staff recounted some of their favorite points from the debaters:

"Werewolves are basically moon dogs."

"Now I'm wondering what I should be for Halloween."

"One major point is that you will literally always have silverware at your house!" for protection followed by . . . "Yeah, and you can just throw it at them!"

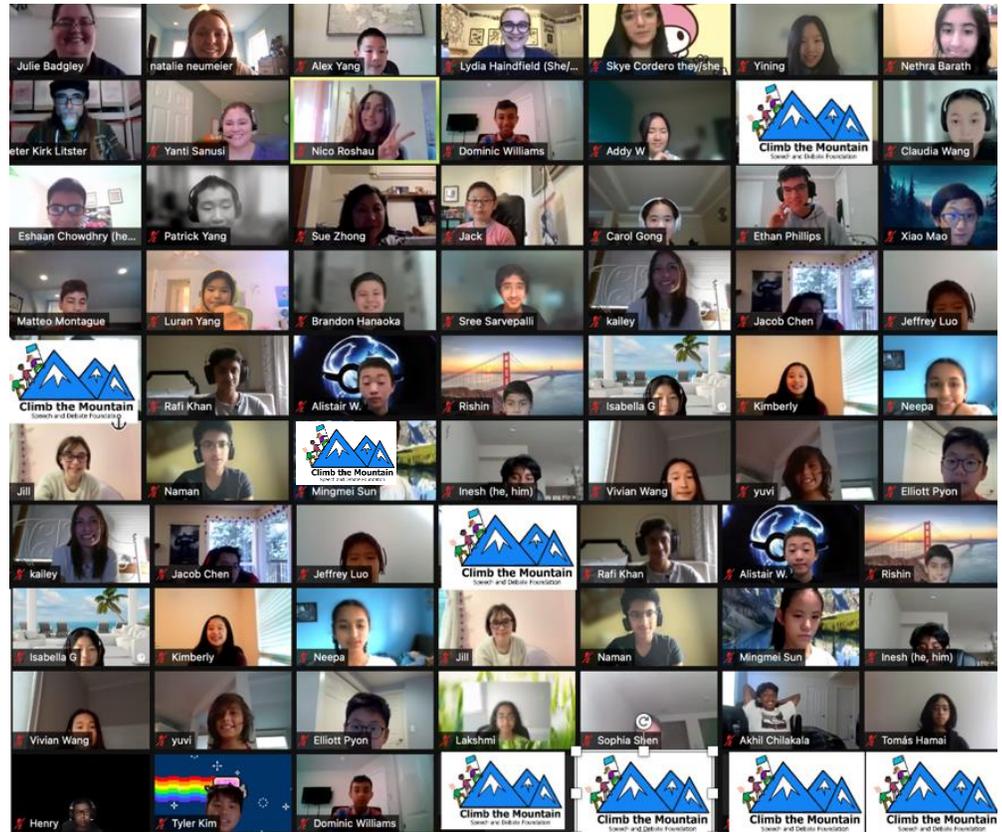
We here at Climb the Mountain could tell this was going to be a creative debate just based on the prep time. Some awesome responses we heard during the debates included this “mildly” overstated harm to the metric system:

“If we switch to the metric system, we will follow what Great Britain does. This will remind us of the bloodshed the Colonies experienced.”

“Britain invented the imperial system, and they don’t even use it, that’s how you know it’s bad!”

“Vampires only drink a little blood, like a protein smoothie. No one would drink too many cups of a blood smoothie.”

“You could be defeated by vampires because the vampire would just take off your covid mask to protect itself from the garlic.”



Thanks Climb debaters for being so awesome with your creativity within your debates!

Jim was heard muttering “I’m glad they had fun but what about US vaccine policies? School lunch programs? Drug price controls? Bah humbug. Get back to being serious.”

We are climbing the mountain!



Climb Highlights Sept. 2020 to Aug. 2021 . . .

- Hosted the Climb debate camp online in July and August. Approximately 200 students and coaches participated.
- Held a clinic with Eastlake High School, online, helping their students prepare for late season tournaments.
- Fall, Winter, and Spring, instructed 630+ students in debate and speaking in our afterschool program.
- Continued to work with the Greater Seattle Debate League—helping the GSDL board as they build up a new debate league for students from less privileged backgrounds.
- Held six online tournaments for college students.
- Did updates to the Climb web pages.
- Initiated a middle school debate program Timberline middle school (Redmond) with 24+ students participating in the fall, winter and spring.
- Jared Phillips, our Chief Executive Officer, continued to provide guidance for Climb and handled accounting for all of our activities.
- Separately, Jim hosted 7 middle school debate tournaments at Seattle University with Climbers attending who won many awards.
- Answered dozens of emails asking questions about speech and debate.
- Assisted coaches in finding judges for tournaments.
- Updated the national speech and debate contact list.
- Again, Jim did the traditional late December debate clinic with BC Academy debaters who went on to win multiple awards at national tournaments.
- Provided help for doing online debating including a troubleshooting guide.
- Connected coaches to hire assistant coaches for their programs.
- Developed PowerPoints and Scripts for middle school 3 on 3 parliamentary debate, elementary debate (climb format), and public forum debate. The scripts show young debaters how to give their speech so they can focus on the content of their arguments. For elementary school debaters, they've made a HUGE improvement in the students' quality of argumentation.

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 July 2020 to August 2021). ***Did we miss you? We are very sorry for the omission and we want to correct it!*** Please email Jim at jim@climbthemountain.us and tell him. :)

- **Aviv Bridge**
- **Char Main and Chris Dunlap**
- **Dan Evans**
- **Drake Skaggs**
- **Heather Caterson**
- **Jared Phillips and Loan Lam**
- **Jay Busch**
- **Jessica Clarke**
- **Jim Hanson**
- **June Chen**
- **Michael Bartanen**
- **Mitch Lewis**
- **Nicholas Robinson**
- **Nick Hesterberg**
- **Robert Withycombe**
- **Rowland Hobbs and Angelo Boccia Cedeño**
- **Sean Collins**
- **Shari and David Barsky**
- **Steve and Meriha Mantle**
- **Timothy Gage**
- **Zach Maghirang**

Thank you to these great Climbers who volunteered help at our programs:

- **Akshay Vakharia**
- **Denise Vaughan**
- **Ethan Luo**
- **Michi Okahata**
- **Mike Bartanen**
- **Ronna Liggett**

Thank you to all those who worked over the past year in ways that really helped Climb the Mountain including:

Alex Lindgren-Ruby, Alyssa Gaston, Blakely Rudolph, Cameron Allen, Chris Fryefield, Dave Mathews, Denise Vaughan, Derek Hanson, Eileen Burdick, Ethan Phillips, Evan Dilley, J.Anthony Tedpahogo, Jason Sandford, Jean Tobin, Jennifer Stephens, Julie Badgley, Kailey Wilson, Keagan King, Kinny Torre, Laura Roark, Lucas Watson, Lydia Haindfield, Malcolm Gabbard, Matt Stannard, Mia Harris, Michael Bartanen, Natalie Neumeier, Nico Roshau, Omar Fageeri, Parker Davidson, Peter Litster, Rachel Sims, Robert Hockema, Ronna Liggett, Sam Hendricks, Sarah Sherry, Skye Cordero, Sloane Goldberg, Thadeus Smith, Tyler Durbin, Yanti Sanusi, Zach Maghirang.

And to all of the people that have helped grow our community!

[Click here to donate and make a difference](#)