

Getting Ready for HACIA...

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Every year, hundreds of students from all across America get together to discuss issues that we are all affected by. This gathering, called HACIA Democracy, has been taking place for 17 years and is considered one of the most important international high school debates in America. AIP has participated in this debate for many years, always having an outstanding involvement in the discussion and performing extraordinarily, and this year will be no exception.

As soon as committees and countries were announced, our delegates have been hard at work gathering as much information as possible regarding the issues to be discussed. This year we are represented by a delegation of 29 students who have been preparing for this debate for the whole summer.



The delegates' research started as soon as committee bulletins were published in HACIA's website. In these bulletins, chairs describe the topics or cases that will be debated for three full days. They also include a references that delegates can look into for a better understanding of the topic. However, bulletins are just the beginning. There is a world of information out there for delegates to consider. In fact, says Jessica Forget, who is going to HACIA for the first time, "one of the most complicated parts of this process is that, in some cases, there is too much information out there." It is important to know what kind of information is critical to the debate. According to Gianni Dornelles, a second-time delegate and award winner, "the most useful data consists of treaties, agreements, dates, quotes" and other facts pertinent to the topic at hand.

Gianni also says that "it is sometimes difficult to find objective information related to certain topics, especially the political ones. In those cases, it is important to focus on what has already been said by the country's leaders", instead of on the hype caused by the media.



Still, the Internet is not the only source of information available to delegates. Adrian Gerbaud, another award winner but who is going to HACIA for the first time, says that "it is also useful to talk to experts or people knowledgeable on the issue." This way, they may get a legal or political perspective. In addition, there may also be documentaries or TV shows dealing with the matter at hand. These documentaries, says Nicole Triboulard, "offer a new point of view and new areas to consider while doing further research."

Additionally, since there are 2 or 3 of our school's delegates assigned to each committee, some have chosen to work together as teams in order to share research, help each other understand which points

are crucial, and share points of view. This is what award winner Melissa de la Guardia and first-timer Laura Morales have done. Being delegates for the Inter-American Children's Institute, they often share web pages full of information regarding their topics. In the end, it's a team effort.

However, researching is only a part of this process. After gaining as much information as possible, delegates still have some major work to do. They must write their position papers.



Less than a month away from the summit, most delegates have already finished their papers and are in process of editing and reviewing them. For some, this is the hardest part. Position papers have to reflect the country's position, not the delegate's personal views. This may prove to be more challenging than anything else so far.

Debate team president Isabel Miró says that delegates must also come up with a list of possible arguments and draft resolutions to best prepare for the actual debates. Things may change during the debate and new ideas may arise, but having at least a general notion of where the debate might be headed, is extremely helpful.

Preparing for a debate is difficult. It takes time, dedication, and energy, not to mention patience and a little sacrifice. Nevertheless, all 29 of us are here for a reason. We have spent our summer preparing for what can only be described as a unique opportunity to prove ourselves intellectually.



It takes more than facts to be successful in a debate. One must be intelligent, manage time wisely, be a good speaker, show confidence, and share the right amounts of humor and seriousness. Once a delegate goes into a committee, it's not simply a matter of how much he knows, it's about how well he can use it.

On March 10th, we will travel to Ecuador and prove not only that we are well prepared, but also that we are ready to face the challenge and succeed.