

The brains behind Bromfield's High School Quiz team

BY AMANDA LARIVIERE · FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2021

WGBH's "High School Quiz Show," an on-air academic tournament, will feature a team of students from the Bromfield School in February as 15 additional teams from across the state race to hit a buzzer, answer questions, and compete for a state championship title.

"While trivia can often be random, unusual bits of information, many of the questions on the 'High School Quiz Show' and the quiz team in general are not useless at all," said Kathleen Doherty, the coach of Bromfield's quiz team, adding that students often remember material from classes they took years ago. "I am always impressed by the collective knowledge of the group in answering questions about chemistry, biology, history, music, and psychology."

Billy Costa, the show's host, will moderate season 13 from the WGBH television studio in Brighton, while teams of four will play remotely. To start the bracket-style competition, the Bromfield team will compete against Sharon High School. The competition between the winners of each bracket will continue until two of the 16 teams remain. While Costa will ask questions that align with the state's high school curriculum, students are expected to answer questions about current events and general knowledge as well. The defending champion, Belmont High School, will return to the show this season.

Meet the student competitors

Following an internal competition within Bromfield's quiz team, six students qualified to be part of the team competing at the "High School Quiz Show." The Bromfield team includes senior Olivia Ren, who is also the team captain, senior Julian Iverson, junior Sawyer Madison, and freshman Ewan Ward. Junior Lana Ostaszewski and sophomore Diesel Whitten are the alternates.

“We had an eighth-grader who was among the highest performing students,” said Doherty. However, according to the show’s rules, participants must be in grades 9 through 12. “So we hope to see this student qualify next year.”

The team comprises students with varying academic strengths. Iverson, who was obsessed with maps growing up, said he is most knowledgeable in geography and world history, while Ren said her strengths are math and current events. “We all try to study a little bit of everything,” said Ren, as other students answered that they prefer literature, United States history, and science.

“I don’t know if we’ve identified our areas of weakness, which would be a good idea for us to do,” said Doherty. In the past, Doherty said students were particularly versed in music knowledge.

Students recalled joining the quiz team for different reasons. Ward said while students were signing yearbooks last year, a member of the quiz team who knew Ward had a knack for remembering unusual facts wrote that he should join. Iverson said he once attended a recording of the “High School Quiz Show” and thought it would be “a fun extracurricular.” Most of the team members also enjoy watching “Jeopardy!”

Ostaszewski and Whitten are also on Bromfield’s history bowl team, and Ren is part of the math team. While sharing their favorite fun facts, Ostaszewski said that Violet Jessop, a survivor of the Titanic, survived another crash four years later on the HMHS Britannic.

Preparing for the show

Students on Bromfield’s quiz team meet every Tuesday morning before school to answer practice questions from the National Academic Quiz Tournaments, a company that organizes national quiz bowl championships.

A few years ago, with support from the Harvard Schools Trust, the team purchased a buzzer system that has allowed it to better prepare for events, Doherty said. For the past three years, the team has also hosted a trivia night fundraiser.

“I think that if I buzz in and I get one question right, that will be fully my sense of accomplishment,” said Madison. “I am always surprised to see how much of the material we’ve already learned.”

When asked if the Bromfield team has a rival competitor, Ren said: “I don’t think we have a rival coming into this. I think we are just happy enough to qualify.” Members of the quiz team encourage new members to join at any point during the year.

Taping will begin in January 2022, and the show will premiere on GBH 2 and YouTube on Saturday, Feb. 5, at 6 p.m.

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