

# LifeSmarts

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The secret to their success may well be equal parts attitude and preparation.

"If we place 40 out of 40, I'll still smile," said team member Robert Murphy.

Catherine Wega, an English teacher at Dallas High School and the boys' LifeSmarts coach, explained that attitude has been characteristic of their journey so far.

"We were nervous (at the state competition) but we weren't worried. We just came to take it as it is," said teammate Daniel Smith.

At the March school board meeting, team members said it was their relaxed approach that sealed the correct answer on the final question at states. When the opposing team answered im-

pulsively, Dallas took their time and came up with the correct answer.

Wega, explained the boys are preparing hard for the next and final round of competition. But, she said, at the same time they are not pushing themselves so hard that they're not enjoying the experience.

She said on the way to the state competition in Harrisburg, the boys could have spent their time quizzing themselves for one last session, but didn't.

"All they did was have a good time in the car." She said when they arrived at the competition, as other teams hurried to prepare themselves, they took the time to look around and marvel at their surroundings.

"They were so thrilled they

*"They have a lot of faith that they're pretty well prepared."*

Catherine Wega  
LifeSmarts advisor

made it to state finals that they took full advantage of it," said Wega.

Wega said they'll be using the same philosophy at nationals.

"It's a real honor to go and we want to get as much as we can, bring as much as we can without making ourselves crazy," she said.

"They have a lot of faith that they're pretty well prepared," said Wega.

In the beginning, the majority of the boys had never heard of LifeSmarts. They happened across the competition through their involvement in trivia club where they spend flex period

playing Trivial Pursuit.

Wega said other schools have a course students can take to help them prepare for the competition. Dallas doesn't currently have one. Instead, this year's team from Dallas ranked at the top, through what they said is a combination of school and life experiences.

They didn't study for the first round of on-line testing, they just tried a couple practice tests, then logged on.

Wega said Dallas was notified in January they had been selected as one of the top nine scoring schools in the state. At the same time, the top five scor-

ing individuals were identified. The win was unexpected for some.

"She said 'guess what' " said Smith. "You've made the team and I said, 'what team?'"

The boys said soon after they found out, they were studying through trivia club and lunch preparing for the state competition.

"There's an element of detective work, an amount of common sense," said Wega about how to approach studying. Since the competition covers a broad range of topics that can include consumer issues, state and federal agencies, specific laws, banking practice, environmental law and more, the team searches everywhere for information, from who sends the phone bill to what agency is responsible for enforcing the clean air act.

Team members said it wasn't any particular routine they fol-

lowed to make it to this point, but leading full lives that has made them successful.

"There's no book, it's just life," said John Beberus.

Wega said much of their knowledge comes from the broad base of curriculum the students have had, while other knowledge comes from involvements such as Boy Scouts and positive parental relationships.

"It's kind of what we've done in life and in school," said Smith.

The boys are looking forward to four days hanging out in Orlando.

At least one of them, however, won't be happy with placing 40th.

"If we don't come back top five, I'll be upset," said Smith.

Their advisor is taking a more relaxed approach.

"Just the fact that we made it is enough," said Wega.

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