

# MIETRO

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Principal Patricia Tucker congratulates the Banneker High team, from left, Brandon Jones, Zainep Mahmoud and Andrei Munteanu.

## 'It's Academic' Goes Diplomatic

Teen Quiz Show Visits State Department for Contest on World Affairs

By SYLVIA MORENO  
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Maryland and the District were just about neck and neck yesterday—with Virginia in respectable third place—until that final grab-bag round on the country's longest-running high school quiz show, "It's Academic."

"... Japan's parliament is known by what other name?" Diet.

"... the home of British prime ministers, located at Number 10 on what London street?" Downing.

"... what other division of Islam is followed by most of the population of Iran?" Shiite.

"The winner of the 1982 Nobel literature prize was what Colombian author whose works include 'One Hundred Years of Solitude' ... ?" Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

It was a show like no other produced by "It's Academic," a program in its 42nd season. It was created by Washington lawyer Sophie Altman in 1961, the year that John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as president, the United States broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba, the Soviet Union sent the first man into space and Germany was divided by the Berlin Wall.



Sarah Bassford, 17, and Heather Dougalewicz, 16, show support for the team from J.E.B. Stuart High before the special taping, part of International Education Week.

Yesterday, the program's producers took more than 300 students from the Washington area to the U.S. State Department to talk about the world and to let the teenagers show off their knowledge of today's foreign affairs. The special program was co-sponsored by the World Affairs Council to celebrate International Education Week.

Although the department's best-known faces—Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and agency spokesman Richard Boucher—were not able to attend, the students got a welcome from Togo D. West Jr., a former secretary of the Army and the Veterans Affairs Department.

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Longtime "It's Academic" host Mac McGarry chats with Lizzie Slenker, 16, of Langley High School.

## Students Display Knowledge Of World

STUDENTS, From B1

ment, and a 50-minute briefing and question-and-answer period with deputy State Department spokesman Philip Reeker.

Powell, on his way yesterday to Prague with President Bush to attend a NATO summit meeting, appeared by videotape to ask the first round of four questions.

Thomas A. Farrell, a deputy assistant secretary for educational and cultural affairs, took the opportunity to urge students to apply for the various foreign study or foreign volunteer programs sponsored by the United States and to look into the Foreign Service as a career. "We depend on you to participate in them ... to use them for leadership and development ... to help forge bonds across nations," he said. "I hope you take up your personal responsibility as leaders in this country and participate in making this world a better place."

Reeker's briefing quickly spanned the transformation of world politics from the Cold War to the post-Sept. 11 battle against terrorism. He defined the three principles underlying U.S. foreign policy as the security of the United States; the prosperity or economic security of the United States; and the values of the United States—which prompted the first question from the student audience:

"How does Iraq fit into the three principles of foreign policy?"



PHOTOS BY DUDLEY M. BROOKS—THE WASHINGTON POST

Carlos Hernandez, 12, and Charles Stewart, 13, study the Loy Henderson Auditorium at the State Department before the taping. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, on his way to Prague with the president, asked some questions by videotape.

"The students' questions only got tougher from there:

"If you had a breakthrough in fuel cell technology, how would that affect the Western world's relations with the Middle East?"

"After the Iraqi disarmament, what country will be the next target?"

"Why is there still a trade embargo with Cuba? If we trade with China, when will it be over?"

"Does the United States intend to improve relations with the Middle East and how?"

The Q & A ended and the exhibition game began, with one fun round of questions for the audience and six competitive rounds of questions for the D.C., Maryland and Virginia teams. Among the queries:

"He is the fourth king of the royal Hashemite dynasty in Jordan." (Answer: Abdullah.)

"In 1939, the Trans-Iranian Railway linked the [Persian] Gulf with this 'sea' that is actually a lake." (An-

swer: Caspian.)

"Farming is difficult in much of Africa because the soil is shallow and has insufficient amounts of nitrogen and what other element whose symbol is 'P'?" (Answer: phosphorus.)

In the end, it was D.C. in the house—the State Department house, that is—out-buzzing and out-answering the girls from the Holton-Arms School in Bethesda and the trio from J.E.B. Stuart High School in Fairfax County.

Soft-spoken, bashful Brandon Jones, a 16-year-old junior at the District's Banneker Senior High, attributed the win to this: "It's a lot of studying."

It was all the practice, insisted the Banneker captain, Zainep Mahmoud, a 15-year-old junior.

It was those "couple of high-pressure situations" in which the team found itself at other academic competitions, said Andrei Munteanu, a 16-year-old junior at Banneker. "I'm used to it."

The final scores, which do not count toward qualification for the "It's Academic" championship game at the end of the school year, were 560 points for the District, 430 for Maryland and 340 for Virginia.

The show has been broadcast on WRC-TV (Channel 4) since it was created and now is also produced with local schools and aired in Baltimore, Charlottesville and Pittsburgh. Holton-Arms was last year's Washington area champion.

Banneker created an "It's Academic" extracurricular team in 1990. The school does not boast a championship, but it does hold the "It's Academic" record for highest single-game score with 865 points. The Banneker team also competes in academic contests across the mid-Atlantic region several times a month.

"We haven't won the entire show as of yet," said Banneker team coach Douglas Tyson, a chemistry and biology teacher. "But we're planning to."