



# News Release

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Humanitas High School Students Examine the Right to Privacy**

**Los Angeles (April 2009)** – The theater in the National Center for the Preservation for Democracy buzzed with discussion among high school students who attended a debate between their peers about the government’s role in protecting privacy rights. As part of a conference entitled *Just Between Us*, the debate was a culminating event that took place after students and their teachers spent months researching constitutional issues around the right to privacy. One hundred and forty students from five high schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) who are part of the Humanitas network, an initiative of the Urban Education Partnership (UEP), participated in this educational experience and conference. Humanitas offers students, the majority of them from low income and minority backgrounds, the opportunity to participate in a challenging, interdisciplinary learning experience organized around relevant themes that encourage critical thinking, writing and verbal skills. *Just Between Us* was made possible by a grant awarded to UEP to inform students and parents about the importance of privacy rights as guaranteed in the Constitution.

Humanitas teachers worked in grade-level teams to develop standards-based units in English, social studies, science, and art around the right to privacy, collaborating in interdisciplinary teams to create rich inquiry-driven learning opportunities for their students that resulted in a culminating interdisciplinary essay, research portfolios, and performance-based responses to the issue of privacy rights. While all students wrote the essay and conducted research, those who wished to expand their understanding of

constitutional rights expressed their learning in spoken word, speech, visual art and debate at the conference. Visual display boards created by student teams reflected the depth of their research and work, as well as a range of creative approaches to addressing the privacy issues they examined.

During the debate, teams of two students from Granada Hills Charter High School and two students from Carson High School supported their position with facts and evidence, while thinking on their feet in front of an audience of peers well versed on the subject. A luncheon followed at the Japanese American National Museum, where individual students and teams were awarded \$10,000 in scholarships. Teacher teams also received awards, and students jumped up with pride to applaud their teachers. When polled, students agreed this experience raised their awareness about protecting privacy, and particularly held their interest with respect to misuse of the Internet, as well as what can happen with credit card or social security numbers.

Jane Patterson, director for Humanitas was impressed by the level of rigor and the amount of research in which students engaged. “This event gave Urban Education Partnership an opportunity to honor the outstanding collaborative work of both teachers and students. Humanitas teachers are an inspiring group of educators who serve to remind us that we are fortunate to share our city with people dedicated to improving the lives of young people.”

The project also received support from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Center for Civic Education. Both organizations assisted teachers in developing lessons that made constitutional rights relevant and intriguing for students through thought-provoking simulations and inquiry-driven approaches to stimulate student thinking about privacy concerns.

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