



HOLMDEL TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

"A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE"

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
65 McCampbell Road
Holmdel, NJ 07733
tel: 732-946-1800
fax: 732-946-1875

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Contact: Sean T. Dowd, 732.946.1832

HOLMDEL ECONOMICS STUDENTS TAKE ON THE FEDERAL RESERVE BANK

HOLMDEL (March 17, 2017) – A team of Holmdel High School seniors recently had the chance to participate in the **High School Fed Challenge**, a competition designed to bring real-world economics into the classroom. Students in the school's Advanced Placement (AP) Economics course seized the opportunity that this competition provides to further explore their interests in the financial field and put the skills developed in the classroom to work.

According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, the High School Fed Challenge is "a competition designed to bring real-world economics into the classroom." Team members take on roles as monetary policymakers, analyzing economic conditions and recommending monetary policy.

Holmdel High School was represented by four seniors from Social Science teacher Mr. Sal Guastella's AP Economics class. Jenny Chu, Jennifer He, Brian DeSousa, and Michael Stefany all received high praise from the interviewers, who are senior Federal Reserve Bank of New York economists, said Mr. Guastella. No small praise for a group of students who had to qualify for the trip based on combined final grades in Guastella's AP Macroeconomic and Microeconomic courses.

The first day of the competition involved a series of presentations by the pros that helped students engage in developing their team's economic forecast that they then presented on the following day. Presentations were followed by a series of questions from the Economists designed to test the team's knowledge and acumen on the topic. The judges were very impressed with what was presented by the Holmdel seniors, who now wait to see if they will advance to the next round out of the 60 other teams against whom they competed.

Michael Stefany, one of Holmdel's team members described the competition as "a great way to apply what I had learned in the classroom in a real-world context." He appreciated the opportunity to "take on the challenge of analyzing current economic conditions in order to develop a forecast and recommend a monetary policy response to the Federal Reserve," clearly an inspiring and ambitious task for a young man who has yet to even graduate from high school. His teammate, Brian DeSousa, echoed Stefany's outlook. DeSousa felt the competition allowed him to "go beyond the classroom, and truly apply the lessons from AP Economics to the real world, particularly in analyzing data about our current economy and how data can be used to predict future trends." He also noted that he initially had doubts about being prepared for event,

but afterwards suggested that a typical Holmdel student who had taken the school's rigorous AP course would be comfortable competing, adding "if they put the appropriate time and effort into it." It is apparent that this team was very well-prepared, with Guastella's guidance and passion for the subject.

Mr. Guastella has a particular interest in continuing to offer opportunities like this for his students. With a career in the financial sector before becoming a teacher, he recognizes the value of these competitions for his seniors, especially as they move on to college where they will hone their interests in various fields. He feels this particular event is extremely enriching and prestigious, and plans on continuing to develop these career-based excursions and projects as part of the curriculum. Superintendent of the Holmdel schools, Dr. Robert McGarry, would no doubt agree, as one of Holmdel's district goals is "to increase student engagement, challenge and excitement in the learning process and maximize the potential of every student." With opportunities like the Fed Challenge, Holmdel students certainly have a bright academic forecast.