Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution” with Attorney Lonzey Edwards and Tripp Sel. By bringing in local attorneys who are active in the community on many levels, Ficklin hopes the students will show an interest in “this lively and deep debate.”

Senior Anthony Calkhoun “thought it was very inspirational and made it very easy for us to understand. They both made good comments on the topic.” Before the debate, he says thought it does violate the First Amendment, but even though “the discussion reinforced that, I plan on learning as much as I can, when I can.”

Senior Danny Glover did not know much about the issue before the debate from either side before the debate, but says “it open my eyes to a different part of government. It gave me a real insight into the faith-based initiatives.” With what he found out through the debate, he plans on finding out as much as he can before forming an opinion.

“The lawyers” both had their views and debated their side very well,” says Math Department Chair Helen Rutherford.

“I’ve always like math, and it was fairly easy,” Pittman agrees. She came in one day after school to take the exam, and the score for the one test was applied to the local and state levels of competition.

The competition is administered by the National Surveying Association, and to participate, a school must be sponsored by a local member of the association. Westside has been sponsored and participated since 2002 by Donaldson, Garrett, & Associates, Inc.

“She said, she was just another test her teachers were asking her to take. The first page was basic trigonometry like angles and sides of triangles; the second page were word puzzles she had to solve using trigonometry; and when asked about the third and final page, she just chuckled and says, “it was real hard!”

Having a difficult time with the end of it, and finding out she could cut and paste with the whole page, she wasn’t thinking about it, I just tried my best, and it ended up being good enough.

Over the summer, she was honored at the Association’s annual statewide banquet, where she received her prize money and a plaque.

Just like Pittman, Gonterman did not think much about the competition she was entering. Every month, the American High School Mathematics Association would send the school two problems which students could work on and turn in. At the end of the year, she was also asked to take a test after school.

“I did the most problems and got them right,” says she. “I took the test after school and didn’t think much of it, it was just another test.”

Despite it being just “another test,” she does say “it was pretty hard.” Ten pages of problems, and she could not use a calculator. However, she never thought she would be invited to one of the most prestigious competitions. Finding the letter in the mail informing her of her success, she still did not believe it. “Are they serious?” she thought. “It’s too possible to remember what they were talking about.”

Gonterman was invited to the University of Oklahoma to spend several days of intense competition against some of the nation’s top high school math minds. Out of 20 people – she was the only female – four teams needed to be built, so she was put in one of the rooms and competition with their scores determining teams.

Team competitions consisted of three 20 minute problems, a word problem, and a race to see which team could identify the first 100 prime numbers without a calculator. “We won the prime number problem,” she said proudly.

After that, they had to work as a team on one specific problem. The first person would solve part of the problem to fill in the blank for the next person to solve their part, and so on down the team. “If one person got it wrong, the whole team got it wrong.” The final competition was a scavenger hunt where they had to solve math problems to get the hints.

“Did you participate in any mentally challenging ordeal?” Well, they came in first place.

Both girls say math is a passion for them and plan on studying it in college. After her success in the Trig Star Competition, Pittman says she is seriously considering surveying as a career, and she’s already been offered scholarships by several companies if that’s what she chooses.

We want your feedback! Please e-mail your comments and suggestions for “The Learning Curve” or information about events in the Bibb County school system to: chris@education-first.org or call 743-0023