

Ballard students hold mock caucus with Chet Culver

By MEGAN WAHL
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Senior high school students in Barb Baumgardner's government class got a taste of what an Iowa caucus is like when Ballard High School participated in a mock caucus.

Secretary of State Chet Culver and his staff were welcomed at the event at the 3Cs building in Huxley to inform students of the importance of making an impact on government. A total of 180 schools participating in this statewide project, and more than 18,000 students are involved in the Iowa Student Awareness Caucus.

Culver has been promoting political awareness among high school students in Iowa due to poor voter turnout in the 18- to 24-year old demographic. Culver said this is the lowest level ever in the history of the United States.

"It's important to engage younger students and invite them to participate in the mechanics of how to vote and register," he said, and caucuses are one of the most significant ways students can make a difference. Iowa has the oldest caucus model in the nation and the most competitive, he said.

A lot of people in the younger age demographic do not vote because they are unaware of political platforms. Culver said, "You have the ability to make all the difference in this [current presidential race]. Your vote does matter, and it does count."

Baumgardner presided over the mock caucus, which attracted CNN News. She led students through each step. First, students were able to show their support and speak on behalf of their chosen candidates. Several students addressed the group and listed several reasons why they chose a certain candidate and how the candidate's issues affected them.

John Edwards and President George W. Bush were the two most popular candidates among the government students.

"You have the ability to make all the difference... Your vote does matter, and it does count."

**Chet Culver
Iowa's Secretary of State**

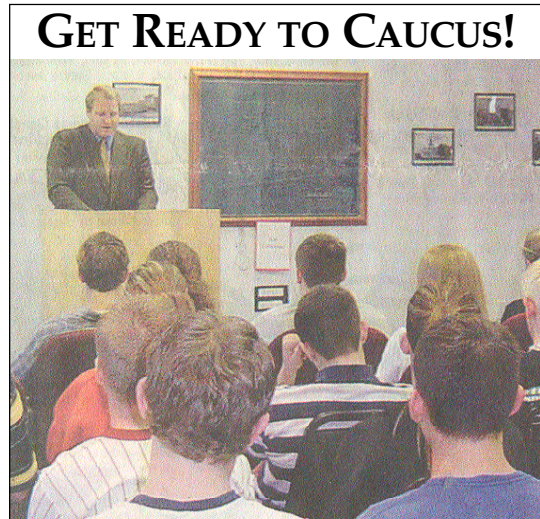


Photo by Megan Wahl

Secretary of State Culver thanks the senior government class at Ballard High School for participating in the Iowa Student Political Awareness Caucus on Monday.

Kim Metz, the first student to speak out, was a supporter of Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C. Metz focused on higher education and liked the idea that if college students worked 10 hours a week, the government would pay a year of tuition.

Kyle Doyle, a firm supporter of President George W. Bush, said he agreed with President Bush's foreign policies and admired Bush's leadership during 9/11 and after while helping with the war on terror. Doyle also supported Medicare, tax cuts and the current economy. I think his economic plan is working now, and if we drastically change any-

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thing now, it will take awhile to get back to where we are," he said.

After students shared their views, they divided into smaller groups to discuss their presidential candidate. Most of the students supported Bush or Edwards. For students remained in the undecided category, and a few other students stood on their own.

Baumgardner then told students they would need to sway groups with less than 15 percent to realign with another candidate.

Metz and Doyle addressed the crowd once again in hopes that the smaller groups would join them. In the end the Edwards and Bush groups finished with 21 and 22 students, respectively. One student remained undecided.

Baumgardner's goal for the mock caucus was to get students to participate and talk about political issues. She also encouraged students to attend the Iowa Caucus Monday night because many of the students will be old enough to vote in the November election.

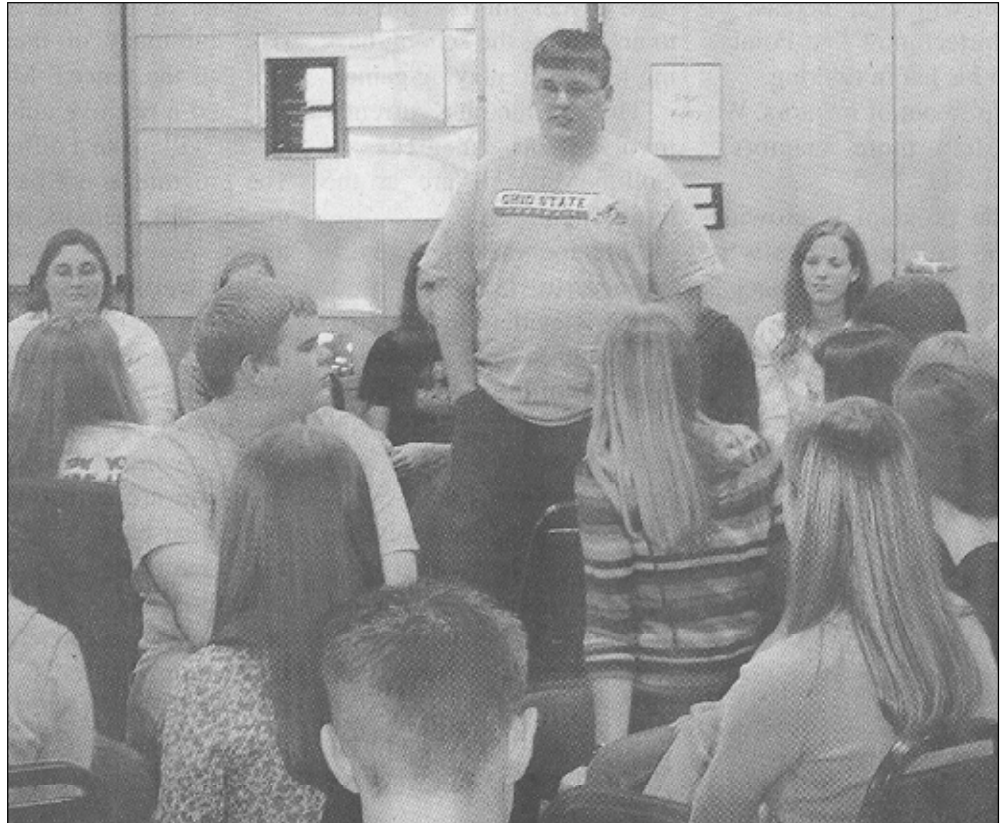


Photo by Megan Wahl

Kyle Doyle, senior at Ballard High School, addresses fellow students during a mock caucus. The mock caucus allowed students to learn more about the political process and become familiar with political platforms. Due to poor voter turnout in the 18-24-year old demographic, the Iowa Student Political Awareness Club has been teaching students all over Iowa about the importance of voting and being a part of the presidential election process.