



Centennial School District 12

News Release

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Centennial students “solve their way” to an international competition

April 22, 2013 (Circle Pines, MN)—Centennial students, grades 4-8, have been developing problem-solving skills through the Future Problem Solving Program (FPSP). Two teams landed an opportunity to advance to the international competition to be held at the University of Indiana in June.

Competing against 32 other teams in the Junior Division (4th-6th grade), Centennial took both first and second place at the state competition on April 6. The first place team—Lauren Couillard, Christopher Meng, Belle Peterson and Dane Stensland—are fourth and fifth graders attending Rice Lake Elementary.

The second place team—Allison Athman, Evan Baker, Greta Panait and Meghan Smude—are sixth graders at Centennial Middle School. Both junior teams have qualified to move on to the next level where they will compete against teams from across the United States and approximately 15 countries. These nine students, including Kaiza Haque as an alternate, will continue to meet weekly to prepare for the international competition. Ms. Athman will represent the state of Minnesota as the flag bearer in the opening ceremonies.

The Middle Division team (7th - 9th grade)—Centennial Middle School students Kelly Couillard, Solveig Stensland, Nina Vang and Madeline White—competed against 35 Minnesota teams and placed fifth in the state.

The Rice Lake Elementary team of Katie Bolkcom, Kaiza Haque, and Annalise Wessman placed first in the Junior Alternates Division.

"Rice Lake Elementary is very proud of our team that qualified for internationals as well as all the other teams that competed and placed at regional and state tournaments," said **Warren Buerkley, Principal, Rice Lake Elementary**. "FPSI is an excellent program which helps students work on 21st Century skills including communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking."

"FPSP is a great opportunity for our students to learn how to work together to solve tomorrow's problems," said **Robert Stevens, Principal, Centennial Middle School**. "What a rewarding

experience for these students who are in training to become great leaders of their communities.”

Early in the school year, 28 students began meeting weekly to learn the problem-solving steps and refine the techniques necessary for competition. Seven teams competed at the regional level. Kimberly Hareland, Leah Korkowski, Sarah Vlasich and Erin Wiese competed at the state competition as a regional qualifying team, and Amelia Beddow, Madison Ekstrom and Blake Zirpel as alternates.”

“After a few years in the program, these students get very good at recognizing a problem and utilizing a well-defined set of tools to approach it,” said **Peg Tembreull, Centennial Future Problem Solving Coach**. “Future Problem Solving is a lifelong skill teaching people ‘not what to think, but how to think!’”

What is the Future Problem Solving Process?

The Future Problem Solving process is a series of six steps where the competitors, in teams of four, are given a story (called the “future scene”) set anywhere in the world, several years into the future. The scene is related to a predefined global topic and is littered with issues. The teams analyze the story and identify 16 problems from various categories (economics, health, environment, etc.). They then determine an underlying problem and come up with 16 possible solutions. From there, they develop criteria with which to rank their solutions, apply these criteria, and form an action plan to implement their solution. This is the written part of the competition and they are allowed two hours to complete the process. Next, in the oral part of the competition they are given various items (duct tape, aluminum foil, etc.) from which they design costumes and props, and they present a skit to sell their action plan.

Founded by creativity pioneer, Dr. E. Paul Torrance, Future Problem Solving Program (FPSP) stimulates critical and creative thinking skills, encourages students to develop a vision for the future, and prepares students for leadership roles. Future Problem Solving Program International involves thousands of students annually from Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Portugal, Russia, Singapore, and the United States.

The teams are seeking additional funds to help defray costs of traveling to the international competition. If you are interested in donating, please contact Peg Tembreull, Future Problem Solving Coach for Centennial Schools, at (651) 481-9294.

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