Rick Flickinger – 2003, 2005, 2009 Future City Winning Teacher

Q: How long have you taught and what subject do you teach?

I have been teaching for 34 years. I started at Central Noble High School, moved to Paul Harding High School for almost 20 years before arriving at Leo High School. Presently, I teach 8th grade science and a Project Lead the Way, Gateway to Technology class. Over the past 34 years, I have taught 22 different courses ranging from 7th grade science up to Advanced Biology, Botany, and Ecology. Also having a math minor I have taught a range of math classes from 7th grade up through high school algebra. There were even years when I taught Computer Literacy and computer programming.

Q: What made you decide to participate in this event?

I began participating in the Future City Competition because I saw an opportunity to get students involved. Especially students not in sports or on teams like the Academic Super Bowl. There is always a need to try to get all types of students involved in some extra-curricular activity to help them keep their interest in the educational program.

Q: What were the notable rewards for you and the students?

My involvement in the Future City Competition has had a number of rewards for me, my school and especially my students. I have always allowed small groups of students to be part of this competition. Sometimes by their own choice or circumstances, the number of groups has limited themselves. The rewards I have noticed are the following:

• cooperation, between students, between teachers and students, between our mentor and students and between students and their parents;

• an increase in communication skills (these have not improved just because of the presentation the students have to make but they have improved again between everyone involved that worked on the projects);

• an increase in calculation practice as students try to figure out scale models;

• imagination or thinking “out of the box” has really improved in both the students and in me; and

• the development of research skills has greatly improved as the students tried to find research that might support some of their “wild” ideas.

Q: How did you manage things like: time, deadlines, creating a positive team atmosphere, facilitating rapport between the students and your engineering mentor?

My engineer-mentor and I tried to provide time after school twice a week for the students to work on their projects. Most of the time we have been able to secure some parent volunteers to help with the after-school supervision. Several weeks before the competition we will provide up to five days per week available for them to work on the projects. In addition to available time, we design a timeline calendar...
to help both the students and their parents keep track of our working times and deadlines. It is extremely important to create a good rapport with the students. We also work through any conflicts between students by talking out the problems. My engineer-mentor works on these same skills with the students also. There has not been a year that we have not had to work through conflicts between students because we are unable to use all ideas that precipitate.

Q: Explain why you would recommend this program to other teachers?

I would recommend this program to any school, large or small, and to any teacher that is interested in seeing growth in a group of students. I know I have had the fortunate experience of taking groups to Washington, D.C. but I think I saw the greatest growth in the groups that did not get that mountaintop experience. I had a student that was very afraid to speak in front of fellow students come back to me and say giving their presentation was the most fun part of the whole process of the competition. Wow! I think it is experiences like this that keep teachers in the teaching business and also keep them being involved in programs like Future City Competition.