

# GHS named state finalist in Samsung Solve for Tomorrow Contest

JOHN KLINE THE GOSHEN NEWS 11 hrs ago



PHOTO PROVIDED Jen Yoder, an engineering teacher at Goshen High School, right, in red, works with members of the school's Technology Student Association to brainstorm ideas and strategies related to the school's recent selection as a state finalist in the annual Samsung Solve for Tomorrow STEM Contest.



GOSHEN — Goshen Community Schools officials this week announced that Goshen High School has been named one of five state finalists in the annual Samsung Solve for Tomorrow Contest.

According to the announcement, a total of five schools from each state were selected earlier this month to be finalists in the Samsung contest, a nationwide competition that challenges students in grades 6 to 12 to apply STEM — science, technology, engineering and math — skills to find creative solutions to real-world issues impacting their local communities.

Out of the thousands of schools that entered the contest this year, the 250 state finalist classrooms were chosen based on their creative and strategic proposals to solve complicated issues that affect their communities by using STEM learning. All 250 classrooms selected as state finalists will receive

one Samsung tablet and have the opportunity to advance through future phases of the contest to win additional prizes and educational opportunities.

At the helm of the GHS contest submission is Jen Yoder, a GHS engineering technology teacher who was responsible for submitting the initial proposal on behalf of her engineering students.

“The contest opened in September and all submissions were due by Nov. 13, with state finalists announced Nov. 21,” Yoder said, noting that while she has submitted projects to the contest before, this is her first submission to be selected as a state finalist. “I actually woke up at 4 a.m. on Thanksgiving Day remembering that finalists were supposed to be announced already. I checked my email immediately, and then couldn’t go back to sleep!”

With \$2 million in technology on the line, each of the 250 state finalists will now be tasked with submitting a lesson plan detailing how students will execute their proposed STEM project and how it will address the identified community issue.

In the case of Yoder and her students, their project involves working with the Goshen Engineering Department to develop a polyacrylamides (PAMs) passive treatment deployment system in order to reduce sediment pollution from construction sites.

“Any time I can have students working on a real-world project, within their own community, the engagement and authenticity goes through the roof. Students get excited when they are tasked with solving real problems that affect the people around them, especially if it’s a problem that an authority figure/adult hasn’t been able to solve yet,” Yoder said of the project. “Sediment is a leading cause of pollution, not only in Goshen but across the nation. The science, math and community impact, along with the engineering design process, made this project the perfect one to submit to the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow STEM contest.”

All in all, about 30 GHS students spanning grades 9 through 12 will be working with Yoder on the project, with most connected to Yoder’s Civil Engineering & Architecture and Engineering Design & Development classes. About half of those students are also connected to the high school’s Technology Student Association, which will be responsible for the bulk of the planning and execution phases of the project.

“Most of the members are in at least one of my engineering classes, so they will lead groups within those classes,” Yoder said of the association. “We are all really excited to be chosen for this next phase

and have already begun work. I have been in contact with leading PAMs researchers in California, who are assisting the students with research materials.”

Speaking to next steps, Yoder said she needs to have the group’s project plan submitted to contest organizers by the Dec. 10 deadline.

“This next step is kind of on me as I plan approaches to the design problem and activities to teach the necessary concepts,” Yoder said of the project. “TSA officers are helping me as I plan the project implementation and incorporating student choices for how they want to tackle it. They are also aware that I am no expert in our design challenges either. I am often times learning right alongside them, which I think pushes them to dig deeper to find answers since they see it is OK to not always have all the correct answers.”

The group will learn in late December if they’ve been selected as the state winner for Indiana, after which the stakes become much higher, Yoder explained.

Once a winning school has been chosen from each of the 50 states, the top 10 schools from that group will progress onward as national finalists while the remaining 40 schools will each receive a \$20,000 Samsung technology package. The 10 national finalists will then be required to attend a Pitch Event where they will present their project to a panel of judges.

For achieving national finalist status, seven of the 10 schools will receive a \$50,000 Samsung technology package, while the final three schools will progress to the national winner stage where each will receive \$100,000 in Samsung technology and supplies.

Rounding out the competition will be the Community Choice Award, where members of the general public will elect one winner from the 10 national finalists who will be eligible to win an additional \$10,000 Samsung technology package.

“We have some tough competition, but my students are up to the challenge,” Yoder added of her group’s prospects. “We don’t talk about ‘if we win state,’ we talk about ‘when we win nationals!’”

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