

Harrison academic team tops in the state

By Casey Hans
Staff writer

A team of academic leaders from Harrison High School will represent Michigan in a national competition in which students match wits, knowledge and develop a sense of teamwork.

Eight students made up the Harrison team that competed at a March 2 state competition in Flint, where they took top honors in the areas of Biology, Chemistry, Computer Fundamentals, English, Mathematics and Physics. They competed against schools which have senior classes of between 101 and 250 students.

Coach Dennis King, a Harrison High science and physics teacher, said "ultimately, it (the win) really is a reflection of the school" and the advanced placement courses offered there. King's encouragement prompted the team to get together and do the 240-question test which tests the students' collective knowledge.

"We rounded up the team, and got together two days before the competition," said student Kevin Adams.

"We got 65 percent — that was first place. The test was tough."

KING SAID organizers told him 50 percent would be a good score, because the test was so difficult. He likened the test to "a very difficult AP (advanced placement) course. If you don't have a good AP program at your school, you probably wouldn't do very well."

Adams and classmates Victor Varsanyi, Andrew Rick, Justin Timblin, Becky Hoyt, Jon Blatt, Michael Jacobs and Ben Pinsky all head for national competition in the annual TEAMS competition — Tests of Engineering, Aptitude, Mathematics and Science. Students were invited to be on the Harrison team based on their academic performance in school, King said.

The academic competition is sponsored by the Junior Engineering Technical Society, which has encouraged high school students to excel in mathematics and science for 40 years.

King is coaching students during their lunch break several times each week until he believes they are pre-

pared for the national competition which will test how well teams apply their knowledge and simulate a set of real-life engineering problems.

BRAINSTORMING will be key, he said.

"The idea is to generate as many ideas as you can," King told students during a recent session. "You don't care who gets the credit. You just want to get ideas like mad."

Through its competition, the engineering society encourages team cooperation, group effort, thinking skills, leadership skills, application of knowledge and academic rigor.

King believes the TEAMS competition is important "there is this big vacuum in the state, as far as academic competitions," and that many times academic winners don't get the proper recognition.

He said ironically, some AP classes which prepared these Harrison students may ultimately be cut because of the February millage defeat. "Because of the millage defeat, some of our most advanced students will not get what they need," he said. "I think it's ridiculous."



SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Harrison High teacher Dennis King coaches the eight-member team that recently won state honors at an academic TEAMS competition and will go on to represent Michigan at the nationals. Pictured are (from left) Victor Varsanyi,

King, Kevin Adams, Justin Timblin, Drew Rick (sitting, center), Becky Hoyt, Mike Jacobs, Jon Blatt and Ben Pinsky. The students are working on their lunch hours to prepare for the national competition.

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