

Elementary Students Build Wind Turbines

By Judy Rogers

The Golden Plains fourth, and fifth grade students recently participated in the Kid Wind Project. The Kid Wind Project is a nationwide event that has 32 activities where students bring in wind turbines and test how much electricity they can produce. Last year over 2600 kids coast to coast competed in this event. This was Golden Plains' first year competing.

"We learned about different forms of energy and how energy can change from different forms into a usable one—Wind, Mechanical, and Electrical," said Dustin McBride, 3-5 science instructor who implemented this project at GPES. "Groups were chosen to give each group the best chance and best thinkers that could build off one another. "We learned a lot of different things including kinds of energy and how energy is made," said Jordyn Fleckenstien, 5th grade. "My favorite kind of energy was the wind energy."

"We ended up taking 24 kids to the competition in Hutchinson in February and 6 functioning turbines," added McBride. "Each group was given a small DC generator and everything else came from their homes and imaginations."

"Groups came through in ways that I would have never thought possible," continued McBride, "and each one exceeded my expectations for a first year, week long build. Some students showed great leadership initiative, and even quiet students built, brought items, and helped plan multi step prototypes."

"The day of the challenge not a single kid was late, and all of them were so excited they talked the entire way to Hutchinson," added McBride. "We ended up bringing 6 of the 14 turbines competing, and even succeeded in earning bonus points with the Instant Challenge where students were given 30 minutes, a pile of supplies and had to build a windmill that could do work and lift washers off of a table."

"Each group also gave a small presentation to a previous National Winner that was helping run the event. The 6 turbines produced on average more electricity down in Hutchinson than they did our final test day here in Selden. After the sun finally set and we got off the bus I half expected to see a bunch of exhausted kids stumble off the bus, but instead each and every one was still excited, and hadn't stopped talking about the day, even though they had been up since 5:00 am. I am very proud of each student that helped build these turbines. I have seen them grow into great young scientists and can't wait to see them improve for next year."

"I enjoyed the thing we did in Hutchinson for the contest including building the model out of the stuff they had there and test the number of washers it would lift," said Jerrit Koerperich, 5th grade. "The bus ride was fun," added Will Bruggeman, 5th grade. "Everyone was so excited about what all we had done that day and that all the groups placed in the contest. We all want to do it again next year."

The students demonstrated their projects to the school board at their March 20 meeting. "It was pretty impressive that these kids could build what they did," said board president Paul Bruggeman. "They had some good ideas."