

To: All Grade 6 – 12) Principals and Teachers of (biology, chemistry, earth science, ecology, physics, life/ physical science, math/computers, technology/engineering, ag science, health and consumer science etc.),

From: Michael Gerhart – Fair Director, 2011 Reading Berks Science and Engineering Fair
(mpgerhart@comcast.net)

Re: **Why get involved in the 2011 Reading Berks Science and Engineering Fair?**

The 59th Reading Berks Science and Engineering Fair will be held March 14 -17, 2011 at Albright College. Over 35 school buildings, 70 sponsoring teachers, and 400 grade 6 to 12 students participated in the 2010 science fair.

The science fair presented over \$8000 in awards in 2010. Many of these awards do not go to the best project in a category. In fact, most of the over 50 awards from companies and organizations designate their money to go not to the best project but to the project they feel best meets the criteria for their award. For example: there was an \$125 award to a project that demonstrates the best use of an electrical or electro-mechanical device, \$100 for best ag science project, \$50 for best use of data, \$200 for project displaying knowledge in metallurgy, \$100 for best use of optics, \$50 to project related to a disability.

Many of the awards are presented through our local science fair for national organizations such as the Water Environment Federation certificate which was presented to a student in 2009 who then entered his project in the national contest for this organization and won an all expense trip to the University of Alaska to compete in their competition. One never knows where an award will take the student. Ten percent of the junior division (gr. 6 to8) students will qualify for a national competition in which the finalists go to Washington DC to compete.

Many parents have told me having their child compete in a regional science fair such as this sets that student apart from many others when applying to a college or for special awards. As one parent told me, entering a science fair does “play well” on a college transcript. In fact, I was told a prominent Philadelphia college will place an application on the top of the pile of students competing in a local science fair when deciding who to accept to their college. This does not mean entering a science fair automatically gets one into a college, but it sure helps.

Since many colleges and universities involve their professors in the judging process they are aware of how regional science fairs are operated. They know a student entering a project in a science fair demonstrates the ability to use the scientific method and is able to effectively use data to prove or not prove their hypothesis. In addition, the student must be able to effectively communicate and explain the project findings to the judges through an interview.

State curriculum mandates are now requiring many schools to demonstrate that students can use an inquiry based approach and data analysis to solve a problem. What better way than through a science, technology, or engineering project. Many teachers require projects for their classes and it does not take much more effort to make these classroom research projects into a science project to enter in the local fair.

It is through the efforts and encouragement of a teacher that students enter the science fair. Please encourage participation in the science fair by your school. The students, parents and the public will thank you for it.

Go to the Reading Berks Science and Engineering Fair website at www.rbsef.org for entry information.