



Cowichan Valley School District

NEWS RELEASE

February 15, 2018

For Immediate Release

STUDENTS USING PHYSICS, DESIGN SKILLS TO BUILD AND RACE CARS

COWICHAN VALLEY, BC – Design, test, refine, redesign—that is what hundreds of students across the Cowichan Valley have been doing the last few weeks as they built and raced gravity cars in preparation for today’s district gravity car challenge.

Over the past few weeks, Grade 6 and 7 students at every elementary school in the Cowichan Valley School District learned about the process of design, tried their hand at woodworking and building, and used traditional physics concepts like potential energy and friction as they built their own gravity car and raced for top spots in their school. Over 1,200 cars have been built by students in the district since the end of January.

“It is really exciting to see so many children across the district trying their hand at something creative and thought-provoking like building a car propelled by gravity,” said Candace Spilsbury, Chair of the Board of Education. “Our children are learning wonderful skills, including refining and redesigning their project, which will serve them well in their future.”

In this challenge, students were required to build a vehicle weighing no more than 600 grams using wood, nails and screws, with the only energy source for the car being potential energy from gravity. The top eight from each school went head to head at the district challenge, which took place today at the Vancouver Island Motorsport Circuit.

While this challenge might just seem like fun and games, gravity cars—and similar activities like the building of spaghetti bridges—are actually aligned with the new Applied Design, Skills and Technology (ADST) curriculum in B.C. and are designed to allow students the opportunity to explore trades and technology careers. This activity in particular introduced students to some important hands-on and practical application of skills in the areas of drafting and design, physics, and woodwork.

“Engaging students in their learning is a priority for us in the Cowichan Valley, and we achieve that by providing students with unique, hands-on and place-based learning opportunities,” said Rod Allen, Superintendent. “Walking into the gym while kids were building and racing their cars was brilliant. They were excited, engaged, and even if they lost their race they were immediately thinking of how they could refine their vehicle to win the next one. There was no disengaged child in those gyms, and that is exactly what we’re trying to do here in the Cowichan Valley—engage every single one of our kids in their learning.”

After the district challenge is complete, the top four racers from each elementary school will move to the regional Skills Canada British Columbia (SkillsBC) competition in Nanaimo, which is taking place on March 2, 2018. If they win that competition, they’ll head to provincials in April.

Since 1994, SkillsBC has provided tens of thousands of students with opportunities to explore skills trades and technology careers for the past 22 years. Their unique programming offers youth in Grades K-12 and in post-secondary safe and engaging environments to explore trade and technology careers. For more information on SkillsBC, visit <http://www.skillscanada.bc.ca/>.

-30-

Media Contact:

Katie McLaughlin
Communications Specialist
Cowichan Valley School District (SD #79)
Phone: 250-748-0321 ext. 308
Email: kmclaughlin@sd79.bc.ca