



CONTACT:

Dr. Kaitlin Maguire, 208.332.1726, kaitlin.maguire@stem.idaho.gov

Tony Harrison, 208.332.1726, tony@COMMposition.biz

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Four Idaho student teams earn eCYBERMISSION honors

BOISE, Idaho (June 3, 2021) — Students from Boise, Rexburg, and Genesee earned top honors in Idaho's second annual eCYBERMISSION competition, a national Web-based STEM challenge for students in grades six through nine.

The Idaho STEM Action Center partnered with the U.S. Army Educational Outreach Program and the National Science Teachers Association to bring the popular competition to the Gem State.

The teams were challenged to explore how science, technology, engineering, and math apply to their world while working as a team to solve problems in their communities.

Team Genesee from Genesee School District in Genesee took first place among Idaho's ninth-grade teams. DRAGON SLAYERS from Madison Junior High School in Rexburg earned first place among the state's eighth-grade teams. And SnAlpple from Sage International School of Boise garnered first place among Gem State seventh-grade teams.

Six teams from throughout the state took part in Idaho's second annual event, including two in grade nine, two in grade eight, one in grade seven, and one in grade six. More than 2,000 teams nationwide compete in the annual challenge, which the Army and NSTA launched in 2002. Teams must score at least 300 points to be considered for a state placement.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, teams could be comprised of students from mixed grade levels, but they had to compete at the highest grade of a team member. For instance, Team Genesee competed with 9th-graders since one of its members is in 9th grade even though their partner is a 7th-grader.

The Army is giving each student on a first-place state-winning team a Series EE U.S. Savings Bond worth up to \$1,000 in matured value. It is also giving each student on a second-place state-winning team a Series EE U.S. Savings Bond worth up to \$500 in matured value. There are no second-place state-winning teams in Idaho this year.

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In addition, the STEM Action Center is awarding the advisors of first-place teams \$750, second-place teams \$500, and honorable-mention-earning teams \$250 to further STEM learning and engagement. The advisors can use this money for STEM education in their classroom or support eCYBERMISSION at their school next year.

Teams were invited to submit an optional video for a chance to win cash awards. Team Genesee took first place, with its members winning \$300 each. Burley STEM Leaders 7th-8th Team from Burley Junior High School took second place, with each student winning \$250. And DRAGON SLAYERS took third place, with the teammates winning \$200 each.

According to STEM Action Center interim executive director Dr. Kaitlin Maguire, competitions like eCYBERMISSION are important to the state's economic well-being.

"Our eCYBERMISSION students are engaging in a real-world research-based competition just like with our recent Idaho Science & Engineering Fairs and our Idaho Exhibition of Ideas this fall," Dr. Maguire said. "They will find this experience invaluable as they transition into the workforce. And with eCYBERMISSION being a virtual competition, students learned important lessons during the COVID-19 pandemic about how to work in small groups to conduct unique, relevant research and have the opportunity to present their findings in a virtual venue."

In addition to facilitating critical and creative thinking, problem solving, innovation, and collaboration, she said STEM jobs pay about twice as much as non-STEM jobs.

"Moreover, 19 of Idaho's 20 hot jobs through 2026 require STEM skills, and STEM jobs pay about twice as much as non-STEM jobs," Dr. Maguire said. "Among Idaho parents who were surveyed, 99 percent believe STEM skills will play an important role in the future, and within a decade 90 percent of jobs will require digital literacy."

About the Idaho STEM Action Center

The Idaho STEM Action Center was created in 2015 because Idaho citizens are not entering the STEM pipeline fast enough to meet current and future Idaho workforce needs. Its goals are to increase equitable access to STEM opportunities, align education and workforce needs, and amplify awareness of STEM throughout Idaho. The organization is working with industry, government, educators, and students to develop new resources and support high-quality professional-development opportunities to foster a STEM-educated workforce that ensures Idaho's continued economic prosperity.

Visit STEM.idaho.gov for more information, and visit <https://STEM.idaho.gov/support-us/foundation> to make a tax-deductible donation to the Idaho STEM Action Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, to enhance the investment the state has made in Idaho's STEM community. Contributions provide greater access to STEM camps for children, student competitions, and many other life-shaping programs.