



KEVIN MERTZ/THE STANDARD-JOURNAL

Mifflinburg students Kinzley Duke and Blakely Gaugler use K'Nex to bring their engineering design to life Tuesday at the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit.

'Purpose-driven learning'

CSIU hosts K'Nex Design Challenge

BY KEVIN MERTZ
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MILTON — Months of planning and design work came to a head Tuesday as more than 90 students from eight regional schools spent the morning at the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU) bringing their engineering works of art to life.

The K'Nex Design Challenge featured two separate categories, one for students in grades four and five, and the other for grades six through eight. Schools participating in the challenge included Mifflinburg, River Valley Nature School, Line Mountain, Danville, Central Columbia, Millville, Midd-West and Berwick.

Design

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Colleen Epler-Ruths, of CSIU, said preparations started in the autumn for the challenge, which is held across the state with regional winners advancing to compete in May at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg.

“In the fall, we release an engineering challenge that is associated with one of the United Nation’s sustainable development goals,” Epler-Ruths said.

This year, she said students were tasked with bringing a sustainable production machine to life inside of a factory setting.

Students must research and design their creation, and use K’Nex toys to bring it to life during the competition.

Epler-Ruths said CSIU has been hosting the regional challenge for more than a decade.

“We get a lot of interest in it,” she said. “It’s purpose-driven learning.”

CSIU brings in a panel of six individuals to judge the competition.

“They are community partners,” Epler-Ruths said. “A lot of them are engineers. They work in factories. We have a civil engineer here.”

According to Epler-Ruths, the various participating schools utilized different methods to select the students who were taking part in Tuesday’s challenge.

Sarah Gemberling, a teacher in the Mif-

flinburg Area School District, said enrichment students were eligible to participate.

However, due to team-size limits not all of the students who were part of the challenge were able to attend Tuesday’s challenge.

“There were a lot of students participating,” Gemberling said. “Two teams were eligible to come.”

Mifflinburg selected its teams based on which groups from within the school had reached the end stage and were most confident in their designs.

Gemberling said all of the students involved worked hard on the project.

“It took a lot of planning and design,” she said. “They worked through problem solving.”

Even during Tuesday’s challenge, some students encountered challenges bringing their designs to life with the K’Nex toys provided.

“They have to problem solve on the spot,” Gemberling said. “I’m very proud of them. They have worked so hard.”

Like the Mifflinburg students, those from Line Mountain also put a lot of time and effort into engineering their designs.

Line Mountain student Emery Soboleski said work on the project has been ongoing since late December.

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From left, Mifflinburg students Corrie Hackenberg, Emily Kreisher and Lyla Buttorff inspect their creation during the K’Nex Design Challenge.