DOE's national Science Bowl kicks off this month with regional competitions

by Jeff Sherwood

America's Youngest Scientists and Engineers Show What They Know

More than 17,000 middle school and high school students from 42 states begin a journey this month that they hope will take them to the National Finals of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) National Science Bowl(R). The National Science Bowl tests teams in all areas of science and math using a fast-paced question and answer format similar to Jeopardy. It is the only educational event and academic competition of its kind that is sponsored by a federal agency.

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) launched the National Science Bowl(R) competition in 1991 to help develop the workforce that America requires to remain at the forefront of scientific advances, technological innovation and economic competitiveness. Over the past 17 years, the National Science Bowl's high school competition has grown from 18 regional events to 67 regional events involving more than 12,000 students this year. The National Science Bowl's middle school competition, which began in 2002, has grown from seven regional events to 31 regional events involving more than 5,000 students this year. DOE's Office of Science administers the National Science Bowl program to encourage students to excel in science and mathematics and pursue careers in those fields."The National Science Bowl is an important part of DOE's effort to encourage America's best and brightest young students to begin thinking about careers in science and engineering," said Secretary Samuel Bodman. "These young people represent the next generation of scientists. Soon, we will be looking to them to solve the great questions facing our nation and our world and to keep America at the forefront of innovation and competitiveness."

To reach the National Finals, teams -- consisting of four students, an alternate and a teacher/coach -- must win their regional championship. The National Science Bowl for high school students features 67 regional competitions all over the country. The high school National Finals are scheduled for April 26-30 in Washington, DC. The National Science Bowl for middle school students features 31 regional competitions, with the middle school National Finals set for June 21-24 in Denver, CO. Each regional championship team receives an all-expense-paid trip to the National Finals. The high school national championship team will win its choice of three science-related trips, which include a trip to France and a trip to Australia. The middle school national champion will win a cash prize and several sponsor- supplied prizes.

Participating teams practice for months before the competition, with many teams testing their knowledge against scientists at major corporations, colleges and universities, or DOE National Laboratories. These scientists and professors volunteer their time to help students prepare for the challenging competition.

Middle school teams are quizzed on a variety of science disciplines including earth, physical, life, general

science and math. High school teams are quizzed on all science disciplines including biology, chemistry, physics, earth science and astronomy, as well as math. Most high school questions are so challenging many scientists would have trouble finding an answer.

In addition to the Jeopardy-style contest, teams at many of the middle school competitions as well as both the high school and middle school National Finals will participate in a Hydrogen Fuel Cell Model Car Challenge sponsored by DOE and General Motors. This contest challenges students to design, build, and race model cars. Supervised by engineers from DOE sites and General Motors, students will learn what it will take to make their car designs a reality. Designers of winning cars receive cash prizes for their schools and the prestige of winning a DOE national competition.

Corporate sponsors of DOE's National Science Bowl include General Motors, AREVA, Inc., Bechtel Corporation, IBM, and Texas Instruments. Regional sponsors range from small companies to the Fortune 1000. The National Science Bowl is managed by DOE's Office of Science.

More information about DOE's National Science Bowl(R), including the list of regional science bowl competitions, is available at http://nationalsciencebowl.energy.gov/.

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