

PRESS RELEASE

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Muskegon Heights students solve problems, Place 1st in physics competition

MUSKEGON: Today officials from the MAISD Regional Mathematics and Science Center (MRMSC) announced that a student team from **Muskegon Heights Math & Science Academy** placed first overall in the Middle School Amusement Park Physics Day state-wide competition. Each member of the student team will receive an Olympic style medal and ribbon. Two additional teams from the Muskegon Heights Math & Science Academy tied for second place, and a team from Muskegon Technical Academy placed third overall. Students from all three teams will receive ribbons. All of the competing students were some of the first to ride on the new *Thunderhawk*, Michigan's first suspended looping roller coaster.

The Muskegon Heights students beat out **142 teams from 21 other schools** from throughout Michigan during the 17th annual physics competition held on Wednesday, May 14, 2008, at Michigan's Adventure Cedar Fair Park. Over 1,000 participating students in grades 5 – 8 worked in teams to answer eight questions about the physics behind the amusement park rides. Students used handmade "accelerometers" to detect and measure the "g-forces." They used "altimeters" to measure angles, put trigonometry skills to the test, and solved height problems by using the length of their own pace. Officials compared the student calculations to the actual measurements to determine the percent error. The top scoring teams were those with the least percent error.

Prior to their experience in the park, teachers attended a special workshop offered by the MRMSC to learn how to best prepare students. They then taught the students how to measure distance, time, vertical angles, and acceleration using a few basic trigonometry and physics concepts. Each child also built an altimeter and accelerometer out of common inexpensive materials. Then they moved outside the classroom to solve problems similar to those encountered in an amusement park. They measured the height of school buildings, flagpoles, trees, and telephone poles. Students completed their preparation by reviewing sample problems.

The following schools participated in this year's Middle School Amusement Park Physics Day: Bay City Public Schools, St. Ann School (Gaylord Diocese), Godwin Heights Public Schools, Immaculate Heart of Mary (Grand Rapids Diocese), Hamilton Community Schools, Haslett Public Schools, Hesperia Community Schools, Manistee Catholic Central Schools, Montague Area Public Schools, Muskegon Heights Public Schools, Muskegon Public Schools, Muskegon Technical Academy, Oakridge Public Schools, Orchard View Schools, Spring Lake Public Schools, St. John's Lutheran School (Grand Haven), St. Thomas School (Grand Rapids), and Whitehall District Schools.

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