

Team Number: 169-64120

Affiliate: Turkiye

Organization: ALKEV SCHOOLS

School:

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: An innovative fusion of custom engineering, real-time color-sensing, and high-stakes theater in an underwater game show.

Text:

At the heart of the team's Presentation was a custom-built system that integrated LEGO Spike programming, color-sensing logic, spring-powered mechanics, and motorized scoring. To raise the stakes, the team based their Presentation on their own custom software, which dynamically adapted the skit in real-time based on a randomized wheel spin. Going a step further, they integrated an AI facial-recognition camera to identify which contestant was included for the bonus round, automatically triggering personalized, character-specific questions to see who would "Win It Big."

Beyond the code, the team engineered a sophisticated, spiral-opening iris for the "Eye of the Ocean" reveal, utilizing custom gears, motors, and electrical systems. They seamlessly blended this mechanism with hand-crafted costumes, transforming scenery, and LED effects. This ambitious integration of adaptive AI, physical engineering, and live gameplay created a truly original experience.

Team Number: 105-46330

Affiliate: California

Organization: San Ramon

School: Bella Vista & Vista Grande EL

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: A team-created carousel projector that provided an immersive experience that dazzled the audience.

Text:

This team created an exceptionally innovative and visually engaging rotating carousel of hand-drawn transparencies, which projected changing scenery onto a screen for live character interaction throughout the Presentation.

The fully motorized and carefully balanced carousel demonstrated outstanding engineering, precision, and creativity while seamlessly integrating technical design with storytelling. The projected environments enhanced the overall theatrical experience and made the Appraisers feel like we were watching a live video game. It allowed the performers to interact dynamically with the moving scenes in a highly original way.

The combination of artistic detail, mechanical ingenuity, and successful execution exemplifies the spirit of the Renaissance Award by elevating both the technical and creative elements of the team's solution.

Team Number: 750-10304

Affiliate: Texas

Organization: Cypress-Fairbanks ISD

School: Smith Middle School

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: An impactful tapestry of parts of the brain, exposing mental health impacts that teens face from social media addiction.

Text:

The Appraisal Team was immediately drawn into this Presentation through its incredibly cohesive storytelling, creative technical execution, and thoughtful attention to detail. From start to finish, the storyline clearly portrayed the internal workings of the brain as it interacted with social media, balancing the logical, emotional, and creative aspects of thought in a way that felt both engaging and deeply relatable. The Presentation evoked genuine emotion and delivered a relevant message about safety and the impact of social media on everyday life.

One of the first things that stood out was the outstanding costume design and the intentionality behind every material choice. The team's use of recycled and upcycled materials not only demonstrated creativity, but also reflected the personalities of each character in such a meaningful way. We loved seeing the logical part of the brain incorporate recycled paper towel cardboard into the costume design, while the mathematics book pages transformed into beautifully crafted paper fans on the dress. The emotional character's costume was especially memorable, using paper cups to create a dramatic silhouette and flare. The creative part of the brain integrated hand-painted coffee filters cascading from head to toe. Every costume choice felt purposeful and helped tell the story visually.

The technical aspects of the Presentation elevated the storytelling even further. The coordination between the three parts of the brain was seamless, and the Game Show effectively highlighted the distinct aspects of the logical, emotional, and creative mind. The addition of the AI character added another compelling layer to the story, blending technology directly into the internal dialogue of the brain in a way that felt current and innovative.

The "razzle dazzle" moments were particularly impactful. The phone display featuring the contrasting messages of "Reel Life vs. Real Life" immediately captured our attention and reinforced the central message of the Presentation. The dynamic lighting design continuously guided the audience's focus without

ever distracting from the story itself. Instead, the lighting, music, and sound cues worked together to emphasize the overwhelming nature of social media while still supporting the emotional core of the Presentation.

The team hand created an LED sign reminiscent of a neon display, clearly requiring them to learn and apply an entirely new technical skill. The result was bright, polished, and highly effective. Combined with the clean background designs and precision timing throughout the Presentation, the entire production felt intentional and exceptionally well coordinated.

Finally, the acting struck the perfect balance between powerful storytelling and authenticity. Every performer contributed to a believable and emotionally resonant portrayal of the mind's internal conflict.

Ultimately, the Appraisal Team selected this Presentation because we were deeply moved by both its message and its execution. We had never seen technical innovation utilized quite this way on both sides of the phone display, nor such precise coordination of lighting, music, sound, and movement while still maintaining a clear emotional focus. Every technical element enhanced rather than overshadowed the story. The Presentation truly dazzled and dazzled us through its creativity, precision, emotional impact, and meaningful message.

Team Number: 120-33861

Affiliate: Maryland

Organization: Francis Scott Key EMS

School:

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: Combining brain chemistry, pneumatic signals, Morse code, and theatrical elements to save a failing date.

Text:

The “Crabs of Chaos” demonstrated outstanding creativity and innovation by taking the audience inside the human brain to explore three of the chemicals that influence emotions. Their solution thoughtfully combined neuroscience concepts with engaging storytelling as signals traveled from the live “date” to the cerebrum through an impressive pneumatic system to visually represent communication within the brain.

The team’s Presentation skillfully showcased the Cerebrum's Game Show among three major chemicals as they worked to help the hero secure a second date. Costumes, acting, and characterization clearly reflected the role and personality of each chemical, helping the audience easily connect with the story and scientific concepts.

The integration of Morse code messages, SOS signals, and brainwave effects added another layer of originality and complexity to the Presentation. The team-created sound effects enhanced the emotional energy and excitement of the production.

Through their inventive engineering, strong theatrical Presentation, and unique interpretation of how emotions and decision-making occur in the brain, the “Crabs of Chaos” truly embodied the spirit of thinking outside the box and created a memorable and highly creative solution.

Team Number: 105-35385

Affiliate: California

Organization: San Ramon

School: Windemere & Gale Ranch MS

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: A ssserious snakes and ladders board that incorporated magnetic omnidirectional movement with ssspools of fishing line.

Text:

The team utilized small battery-powered cars equipped with magnets on the back of the board to "magically" move the player's pieces on the front of the board. On the back, horizontal movement was done with a series of shelves across each level. Diagonal movement was a combination of DC motors, spooling fishing line attached to the cars, and the shelves becoming drawbridges capable of reaching between shelves. Each motor was individually battery powered. The shelves were carpeted to improve the cars' traction and create smoother movement. All the "hidden" technology of the back was enhanced by the painted grid filled with snakes and ladders on the front. This was an incredible idea that really brought these snakes slithering to life.

Team Number: 185-28852

Affiliate: China

Organization: Shanghai Pudong Youth and Children's Center

School:

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: A transforming story of snack contestants and a health-guru host who succumbed to couch potato glory.

Text:

The team delivered an exceptionally innovative and technically supported story that seamlessly integrated engineering, mechanical design, and theatrical creativity throughout every aspect of their Presentation. Their Game Show centerpiece featured an impressive four-sided rotating device with mechanically transforming panels that shifted between “Human Brutality,” “Snackpocalypse,” “Snack Purge,” and “Hazard” warning displays, creating dynamic scene transitions that elevated the storytelling and audience experience.

Using a complex arrangement of rotating mirrored panels mounted on a gear-driven mechanism, the team created a “virtual” calorie-count display that projected scores for each food item onto a screen. Bright lights were strategically aimed at the mirrored surfaces, and when activated by a switch, the programmed gear system rotated and precisely aligned the panels to form the correct numbers and letters for projection.

The team designed a transforming trophy prop that opened to reveal a new appearance while simultaneously producing an air effect to add surprise! Each costume incorporated its own unique transforming feature. The chocolate bar costume dramatically snapped in half, the soda costume “fizzed” when Mentos were added, the chip character revealed a giant tongue that removed seasoning from its surface, and the popcorn costume featured kernels that popped from the performer’s headpiece.

The team concluded their Presentation with a memorable transformation that combined humor, creativity, and visual design. In a surprising reveal, the Game Show host was exposed as a larger-than-life “health guru,” brought to life through an inventive human-powered face constructed by three team members serving as the oversized eyes and expressive mouth, complete with lips and teeth. In a humorous twist ending, the health guru ultimately succumbed to the irresistible flavors of MSG and saturated fats, enthusiastically tasting the snack foods before transforming into a couch potato.

Team Number: 750-29152

Affiliate: Texas

Organization: Conroe ISD

School: AST/The Woodlands College Park HS

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: Satirical rhyming, stunning effects, and bold engineering that transformed organ donation into unforgettable theater.

Text:

The team tackled the highly complex and emotionally charged topic of the organ transplant crisis through a satirical, card-themed Game Show that blended social commentary, theatrical performance, and advanced technical engineering into one cohesive and unforgettable experience.

One of the team's most unique creative risks was transforming their entire script into an AABB rhyme scheme filled with symbolism, metaphors, satire, and lyrical storytelling. Rather than using rhyme as a comedic gimmick, the team integrated poetic language into a serious and controversial subject matter, creating a striking contrast between playful delivery and life-or-death stakes.

The team also showcased innovation through their set pieces and mechanisms. The Appraisers were particularly impressed by the theatricality and visual impact of the final reveal sequence. As a character rose dramatically on the scissor-lift platform surrounded by swirling dry ice effects. The scene became both visually stunning and emotionally powerful. Combined with the exaggerated jester-inspired host costume, thematic card imagery, responsive LED EKG monitor, infinity mirror effects, spinning illuminated heart, and music-producing mechanical box, the production created a fully realized theatrical world unlike anything else at the tournament.

Team Number: 105-49970

Affiliate: California

Organization: Independent

School: Canyon Crest Academy

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: A daring game-show mystery packed with inventive engineering, theatrical risks, and unforgettable creativity.

Text:

This team transformed a simple mystery into a fully immersive courtroom game show experience that was packed with technical innovation, theatrical flair, and non-stop surprises. At the center of the performance was an extraordinarily engineered Gimmick: a fully interactive table featuring an animated face, evidence delivery systems, a self-locking box, and so much more. The engineering behind this table brought it to life and elevated the theatrical experience for the audience.

The team's engineering excellence extended throughout the entire Presentation. Their caution-tape release system and telescoping jail cell utilized a host of sophisticated engineering methods to create a sudden and dramatic visual moment that instantly and flawlessly transformed the scene from a court room to a crime scene and then to a jail cell. The Razzle-Dazzle Effect showcased impressive integration of sound engineering and precisely timed motion to produce a suspenseful and flashing finale that stuck with the audience. The combination of their exceptional integration of technical skill, creative design, and polished performance leads the Appraisers to share this Renaissance Award with the team.

Team Number: 750-85657

Affiliate: Texas

Organization: CHAPEL HILL ISD

School: Chapel Hill Junior High

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: bringing the story to life with an eye-popping set, which led to a page-turning Presentation.

Text:

This team took "bringing a story to life" to the next level. It began with a closed book that laid flat on the floor. From there, each page turn popped up a new scene with a new backdrop to step into and on top of. Each scene introduced something new to interact with, from a table, to several puzzles, to a dungeon. This single-book prop created four distinct scenes in a novel way and was true to its title, "Forget Me Not."

Team Number: 164-90453

Affiliate: Mexico

Organization: Euroamericano Valle

School: Euroamericano Valle

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: a jumping trick that awed the Appraisers as one team member appeared to leap through another for a truly Special Effect!

Text:

This team sprung into action to begin their ancient quest! Their jumping trick had everyone in awe as one team member appeared to leap through another. This feat of gymnastics required multiple team members to be in precisely the right places to complete this illusion. Their treasure chest fit thematically with their Ancient Egyptian story as well as dimensionally so that the Scarab disappeared without a trace. The hard work and practice was only revealed after talking with the team--otherwise the Appraisers would still be convinced by the results of this magic trick!

Team Number: 750-17236

Affiliate: Texas

Organization: Dallas ISD

School: New Tech High School

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: the praxinoscope Special Effect, which revealed the murder was instead just a sticky situation.

Text:

There was nothing mysterious about how incredible and cohesive this team's Presentation was. They absolutely "murdered" the Special Effect when the team-constructed praxinoscope revealed that the death was instead just a sticky situation. The costume for Dreadful Kevin was constructed using individually sewn plastic spoons, foam feathers, and a creepy paper-mache mask complete with real deer bones. Fortunately for all, Detective Justin Case was able to solve the mystery of the demise of Phil McCorpse.

Team Number: 175-43207

Affiliate: Ukraine

Organization: NC "JASU"

School:

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: turning plastic bags and two rolling towers into a soaring, ethereal dragon that every Appraiser will remember!

Text:

This Presentation literally stood above the rest when the team rolled out a pair of two-story platforms with team members atop. The towers continually transformed as their story progressed from grey spirits to the River of Oblivion into a gigantic 12-foot tall multicolored dragon with wings that stretched across the stage. The Appraisers were astounded by the quality and theatrical effect of the entire Presentation. Who knew that plastic bags could look so ethereal? This perfectly choreographed Presentation is one the Appraisers will definitely remember!

Team Number: 169-83030

Affiliate: Turkiye

Organization: ERKAN ULU SCHOOLS

School: Erkan Ulu Schools

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: Designing an elaborate palace with interactive rooms and special effects to tell the story of two competing princesses.

Text:

Some palaces are fit for a king. This one was fit for two princesses, built to emulate multiple floors with moving parts, a special-effect mirror that burst open to reveal a character, an interactive painting, shadow puppets, and operable doors. Though the set was constructed almost entirely of cardboard, no detail was left undone. Both exterior and interior spaces were painted and decorated with precision. The set kept revealing new surprises as the team told the tale of two princesses competing in the Silver Shoe Dance Contest. The silver shoe itself was revealed in a hidden compartment that first extended from the set, then rose up in a grand presentation. A special effect was used to convince the audience that the sun was sinking to the ground when captured by the princess of darkness. The Time Machine character's costume was equally intricate, with a spinning motor, fan-style extending wings, and other technical components that symbolized a cuckoo clock and other movements of time. Convincing acting, impressive choreography, and a poignant ending completed this well-designed but topsy-turvy fairy tale.

Team Number: 135-79171

Affiliate: Ohio

Organization: Oakwood City Schools

School: Harman School

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: super characters created by huge animatronic puppets with computerized effects, and a story full of "bright" ideas.

Text:

This team took a calculated risk by depicting their Superhero and Supervillain as super-sized puppets, rather than team members. The villain was an animatronic puppet constructed of PVC, wire, insulation, and a clothes hanger that hovered back and forth with lifelike movements powered continuously by a motor. The hero was a huge humanette puppet with a pool noodle frame, rod-controlled arms, and lights to represent the heart and mind. Computer-enhanced theatrical voice recordings brought the puppets to "life" with alternating messages of doom and inspiration. Keeping with the larger-than-life theme, the team constructed a life-sized comic book to further illustrate the Origin Story. The Critical Tech Man costume was developed with hydraulic devices that activated a pair of team-created circuits--one that raised a light bulb through the character's head and one that switched on the light to symbolize new ideas. Team members and the puppets interacted seamlessly with precise timing and pacing. Light-up costumes completed this story of finding your spark and keeping your inspiration shining bright.

Team Number: 169-21478

Affiliate: Turkiye

Organization: Özel İzmir Sev Ortaokulu

School: Izmir SEV Middle School

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: presenting an unconventional solution that moved the Appraisers with its emotional depth and unique artistry.

Text:

This story dazzled the Appraisers with an incredibly unique Presentation that pushed the boundaries of superhero stories by focusing on the pursuit of the greater good versus personal gain. Using symbolism and unconventional methods, the team portrayed a mature, thought-provoking study of human nature. Each team member created an individual mask and persona that represented the figures of the Cave of Truths, resulting in an eerie and dramatic effect. The unique Technical Costume was constructed as a 3-D mountain landscape. Puppet heroes representing two kingdoms climbed up each side of the mountain using a technical mechanism. Stage Makeup was applied in a distinctive way that showed the reshaping of reality from good to evil. The unforgettable approach of this team will resonate with the Appraisers for years to come.

Team Number: 750-13688

Affiliate: Texas

Organization: Wylie ISD, Abilene

School: Wylie East Jr. High

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: the outstanding creation and execution of their costumes and stage makeup that transported the Appraisers to a pond.

Text:

From the moment this team started their Presentation, we were immersed in a pond with a cast of larger-than-life, colorful characters, including a duck, turtle, dragonfly, and fish. The craftsmanship of the team's costumes was outstanding, utilizing paper mache, fabric, and a variety of construction methods. Their stage makeup was visually stunning and completed the transformation, including face paints, prosthetics, and gems to resemble scales, feathers, wings, and even a turtle shell. This team certainly went all-in, showing us the individuality and specificity of each of their pond creatures in a way that was impossible to miss.

Team Number: 750-52188

Affiliate: Texas

Organization: Independent

School: McNeil & Round Rock High School

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: Treating the Appraisers to a TEA-tastic rhyming musical with exceptional artistic and technical elements.

Text:

Every portion of the set was active, with color-changing windows, tea-breaking ladders, and explosive set pieces. Their Technical Costume was a Cuckoo Clock with multiple mechanisms, including a scissor lift that dispensed potions, a mini-automaton that animated small cuckoo birds, pulleys to create flapping wings, and complex circuitry that allowed for variable clock-hand rotations on command. They had over a dozen intricate, multi-articulated shadow puppets that exemplified the superpowers of the hero and villain in a delightfully nonsensical way.

Global Finals 2026 Special Awards

Team Number: 750-54308

Affiliate: Texas

Organization: Greenville ISD

School: Greenville High School

Award Kind: spirit

Recipient Type: team

For: exemplifying the true nature of Improv with impromptu team formation.

Text:

One half of a two-person UL team decided at the last moment to NOT perform. Choosing to present non-competitively, the remaining team member asked some of her friends from high school for their help. In the true spirit of Improv, they rallied around her and despite many of them never having performed together before, gave a unique performance of the Challenge that brought down the house.

Team Number: 169-37036

Affiliate: Turkiye

Organization: EYUBOGLU SCHOOLS

School: EYUBOGLU CAMLICA ILKOKULU

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: A mature approach to a complex theme of the pressures of adolescence with a tremendous level of refinement.

Text:

This award recognizes a team whose Presentation went far beyond performance and showcased extraordinary emotional depth, maturity, and understanding. Through a heartfelt and powerful story, the team courageously reflected the pressures, responsibilities, and expectations they themselves experience in their daily lives.

What made this Presentation truly exceptional was not only the creativity and skill behind the storytelling, but also the remarkable empathy the team showed toward one another. The team's journey culminated in a reveal that real strength lies in sharing and accepting one's limits.

Team Number: 750-06221

Affiliate: Texas

Organization: Socorro ISD

School: Carrasco ES

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: Taking us on roller coaster of emotions through the bad fashion and music of the 1980's.

Text:

This team took us on a journey to yesteryear, landing in the middle of the 1980's. Complete with bad fashion, decade-specific hairdos, classic 80's music, and even a fanny pack. The Appraisal Team was fully immersed in the decade and found ourselves at the peak of "The Beast," the newest, tallest, scariest rollercoaster in town. Through refined dialogue, comedic timing, and even the addition of an 80's-esque freeze-frame, the audience was swept up in the action and the laugh-out-loud experience. We were left wanting more!

Team Number: 148-29615

Affiliate: Wisconsin

Organization: Germantown

School: Kennedy Middle School

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: For the inventive, life-sized expansion of a puppet world through the use of a 3D pop-up book.

Text:

The Appraisers were captivated by this team's inventive, life-sized, 3D pop-up book, which masterfully depicted the broadening of their puppet's universe. Their Presentation featured an impressive stage that utilized projections to shift scenery for each unique puppet character. Furthermore, the inclusion of custom-designed side bars provided the audience with intriguing alternate perspectives of the puppets throughout the Presentation.

Global Finals 2026 Special Awards

Team Number: 147-14798

Affiliate: Washington

Organization: Mercer Island School District

School: Mercer Island Schools

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: propelling the audience into a well-integrated musical historical moment with a playable piano on the Hindenburg.

Text:

This team presented an amazing “aluminum” playable piano constructed out of cardboard that was modeled after the real-world aluminum piano that flew on the Hindenburg. A homemade air pump showed pure creativity. Their Structure and weights, with a “propeller” weight evoking the actual airship, pulled the entire Presentation together into an integrated whole.

Team Number: 750-91702

Affiliate: Texas

Organization: Conroe ISD

School: Academy of Science and Technology

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: A representation of constraints on women in different eras & blossoming liberation and enduring impact on history.

Text:

The Appraisers were moved by this team's poignant representation of the historical constraints placed upon women across various eras. Their Presentation featured a series of meticulous portrayals including Abigail Adams, Susan B. Anthony, Ida Turnbull, and Marilyn Monroe, celebrating them as catalysts for global change. These portrayals were augmented by unique art styles from each era. Central to their Presentation was a stunning, hand-crafted mechanical flower that gracefully expanded, masterfully symbolizing the liberation of women from societal limitations and the blossoming of their enduring impact on history.

Team Number: 105-29240

Affiliate: California

Organization: San Diego

School: San Diego

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: For thoughtful and musical integration of the team's sea adventure with their unique structure design.

Text:

There's a hole in our boat! The Appraisers were impressed by this team's inventive interpretation of a dramatic sea battle, seamlessly combining storytelling with engineering prowess. Their Presentation featured a carefully crafted ship structure that symbolized the vessel resisting the immense weight of the kraken as the structure collapsed around it. Furthermore, the team's use of four linear actuators to animate the ocean waves and kraken arms added dynamic movement and depth to their Presentation, while the detailed foam-and-wood ship construction highlighted their creativity and technical skill.

Team Number: 750-89312

Affiliate: Texas

Organization: Eanes ISD

School: Barton Creek Elementary

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: blending exceptional pieces of art and a wave of outstanding engineering into a multifaceted Venetian vacation.

Text:

This team demonstrated themselves to be artists and engineers at heart. Their cohesion in design and multiple layers of art throughout their entire Presentation knocked over the Appraisers like a GREAT WAVE. This team's songs, dance, and beautiful works of art left the Appraisers SCREAMing with excitement and PONDERing the importance of music in our lives. The automation of a moving Venetian gondola and canal water with LEGO robotics components made it anything but ABSTRACT to the Appraisers that this team has outstanding skill in design and performance.

Team Number: 169-36533

Affiliate: Turkiye

Organization: TAKEV OKULLARI

School: KARSIYAKA

Award Kind: torchbearer

Recipient Type: team

For: significant impact in their community by building bridges between students and parents with and without autism.

Text:

This team certainly left an impact on their community and on the Appraisal Team. When they looked at their community, they imagined a world where children with autism were accepted and they made that dream a reality. Their efforts to spread awareness about autism built a bridge of empathy between students and parents of their school community. Before their project, 65% of students at their school did not empathize with peers with autism and would not play with them. By the end of the project, that number was down to 16% meaning 110 out of 133 students were now more understanding and accepting of others' differences. Significantly, many students reflected on times they themselves had felt misunderstood and illustrated these feelings. The team collected these reflections and turned them into a book, which they distributed to parents to help them understand more about their own children's experiences. The message of their Project broke through like a butterfly from a chrysalis: We are different. NOT LESS.

Team Number: 127-93909

Affiliate: North Carolina

Organization: Trinity of Fairview Academy

School: Trinity of Fairview Academy

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: rocking the stage with a landslide of creativity that mixed storms, social drama, and real stories to shift views.

Text:

This team demonstrated an exceptionally creative and high-risk approach to the Challenge by blending technical design and theatrical storytelling into a deeply meaningful and original solution. Their Project centered on honoring members of the Craig Town community who were lost during the devastating floods caused by Hurricane Helene, while simultaneously exploring the conflict between lived experience and outside perception.

The team elevated their solution through a powerful juxtaposition of perspectives. On one side of the stage, two social media characters share opposing viewpoints representing those who experienced the disaster and outsiders who criticized their actions. This choice to frame the conflict through modern digital platforms was a unique and creative risk that added relevance and depth to the performance. By incorporating real research—including weather reports, viewpoints from survivors and first responders, and media perspectives the team grounded their imaginative storytelling in authentic experiences.

Throughout their Presentation, the team consistently chose bold, meaningful, and unconventional approaches, blending STEM, storytelling, and service learning into one cohesive and highly original solution. Their willingness to take creative risks, represent complex perspectives, and transform real-world events into an impactful and imaginative Presentation exemplifies the spirit of the DaVinci Award.

Team Number: 750-11202

Affiliate: Texas

Organization: Independent

School: Independent

Award Kind: torchbearer

Recipient Type: team

For: This team's wide-reaching impact on pet adoption through their use of bilingual social media outreach.

Text:

With so many animals in need of adoption, this team set out to make a meaningful difference in how their community learns about that need. They partnered with a local organization that had previously relied on traditional, small-scale outreach methods and had never used technology-based tools such as social media. Working closely with the shelter's director, the team developed a plan for effective digital outreach, and the results have been remarkable. Their social media initiative has already reached more than 25,000 viewers and has helped nearly double the community's adoption rate.

Beyond expanding the shelter's reach through technology, the team also incorporated a bilingual communication strategy to ensure their message resonated with a broader audience. Their advocacy and hands-on work have not only transformed the shelter's approach to outreach but are also making a significant impact on animal adoptions throughout the surrounding areas.

Team Number: 750-88787

Affiliate: Texas

Organization: Pharr-SanJuan-Alamo ISD

School: Raul Yzaguirre Middle School

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: Classic storybook characters colliding in a reality-TV spectacle where Pinocchio's hydraulic nose revealed the truth.

Text:

Characters from several classic tales collided in this team's Presentation, and their use of reality-TV-style confessional interviews gave the story a lively, humorous edge. Each character appeared in a cleverly crafted upcycled costume—paper-mâché elements, reused chip bags, and origami wolf claws all contributed to a playful yet polished aesthetic. The Big Bad Wolf delivered dramatic flair down to his perfectly manicured claws, while Jack and Jill brought their own brand of chaos as they bickered nonstop about who had stolen the crown.

All the while, the true culprit was hiding in plain sight: Pinocchio. His guilt became undeniable when his brilliantly engineered hydraulic nose literally grew as he tried to lie his way out of trouble. His wooden features, sculpted from sturdy paper-mâché with impressively detailed wood grain, added to the illusion.

The entertainment didn't stop with the story itself. Between scenes, the team delivered sharply choreographed musical "ad breaks," complete with witty parodies of popular songs that kept the audience laughing and engaged. Their elaborate scenery—designed as the interior of a giant storybook—featured meticulous paintwork and tiny details that rewarded close attention.

This team's infectious energy, polished craftsmanship, and humorous storytelling drew us fully into their world and made their Presentation a delight from start to finish.

Team Number: 169-08504

Affiliate: Turkiye

Organization: TAKEV OKULLARI

School: NARLIDERE

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: A magical and dramatic performance which roped us in with its artistic charm and symbolic musical movements and spells.

Text:

This team's artistry throughout their Presentation truly cast a spell over the audience. Their Harry Potter themed skit felt worthy of the Great Hall itself, featuring incredibly painted backdrops, perfectly timed background music, and a beautifully choreographed symbolic dance that powerfully illustrated the way bullying can shackle a person. Like a carefully brewed potion, each song choice, movement, and action blended seamlessly together, timed perfectly with the rise and fall of conflict and emotion throughout the solution.

Their performance showcased the unique strengths of each team member, combining like a well-assembled wizarding party where every contribution strengthened the magic of the whole. These terrific theatrical elements worked together, elevating every moment of the presentation with a swish and flick. This middle level team brought their spellbook all the way from Türkiye and proved they possess the creativity, heart, and magic worthy of the Renaissance Award.

Team Number: 106-03696

Affiliate: Colorado

Organization: Cherry Creek High School

School: Cherry Creek School District

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: A fun story cowa-bursting with ionic mayhem and covalent charm where chemistry characters showed us why matter matters.

Text:

Through a Presentation that blended chemistry, character, and creativity, this team truly showed us what “matters,” both scientifically and in life. They wove accurate scientific concepts into their storytelling, bringing ionic bonds, covalent bonds, and noble gasses to life as fully realized characters caught in a swirl of drama and intrigue. Each headpiece, hat, or wig became a clever visual cue, reflecting both personality and scientific principle: frenetic mohawks captured the “chaotic,” giving nature of ionic bonds, while classic white powdered wigs embodied the refined, sharing behavior of covalent bonds, with the static, colorful headpieces of neon and the noble gasses, blew us away.

Two inventive devices heightened the tension of their dispute, each offering a distinct perspective through elegant technical design. On one side of the stage, a large-scale musical “sharing” device, reminiscent of a giant music box, rotated to strike wind-chime pipes with hand-crafted hammers, creating a delicate, harmonious effect. On the opposite side, a playful bean-dispensing machine used a precisely timed system of servos to “give” measured portions into waiting receptacles, demonstrating a contrasting approach with equal technical finesse.

Team Number: 134-81197

Affiliate: New York

Organization: Independent - Port Washington

School:

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: A tale of organic and conventional foods full of theatrical flair, artistry, and technical ingenuity.

Text:

This team delivered a Presentation that seamlessly blended theatrical flair, artistic craftsmanship, and technical ingenuity to bring to life both a lively cooking competition and the real-world considerations involved in choosing between organic and conventional foods. A towering, whimsical scale became a central storytelling device, visually weighing the pros and cons of each food option and helping both the chefs in the story, and the audience, think about how to balance cost, health, and environmental impact.

As the cooking competition unfolded, a charming animatronic paper-mâché fish swam in place while animatedly chatting. Intricate visual details appeared everywhere: the set displayed an abundant spread of hand-made fruits and vegetables realistic enough to look freshly picked, and the chefs' final dish featured a beautifully bedazzled fish centerpiece. Even the dialogue played into the food theme, including a clever twist in which one chef misunderstood "turf" in "surf and turf," assuming it meant steak when it actually referred to ingredients grown in the ground.

Throughout the Presentation, the team wove in heartfelt nods to their hometown community, which had served as the focus of their Project. Apples on the scale, local newspaper clippings, and sea glass incorporated into a hand-crafted basket all served as meaningful symbols of the place and people who inspired their work.

Team Number: 105-49643

Affiliate: California

Organization: San Ramon

School: Bella Vista EL

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: Creating a tall tower with a strong base, while also engineering their structure to collapse later in the IC.

Text:

This team demonstrated advanced critical thinking skills, developing a unique solution. The team's tower was created with the specific intention of making a strong base to support the height of their tower in Part One of the Instant Challenge, while also building the structure so it was made to collapse in Part Two. The tower was created with a paper doily base that was held down with craft sticks. Then the team use an index card tube to support the tower's height which was created by pencils and twist ties. Because of their clever design, the team's tower was able to collapse an impressive amount once the water hit it.

Team Number: 120-50916

Affiliate: Maryland

Organization: Glenelg Country School

School: Glenelg Country School US

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: using only a string, cup, and simple physics to transfer water in a simple, but effective way.

Text:

Using only an unmodified string and cup, this team transported water into their fuel tanks. Simple physics allowed the water to travel into the tanks at a speed that allowed the team to control the rate of flow and stop the water at the right level, while remaining outside of the taped area.

Team Number: 137-27818

Affiliate: Oregon

Organization: Klamath Falls City Schools

School: 21st CLCC

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: taking an entirely different approach ensuring their shapes were uniquely covering the shapes from the “sun.”

Text:

In a challenge where teams were tasked with using materials to create shadows that covered specific shapes on the ground, this team took an entirely different approach. By building upward from the tree with remarkable precision, they ensured their shapes were uniquely covered! Their solution showcased exceptional creativity, bold risk-taking, and a willingness to break away from conventional strategies seen.

The Appraisers proudly award a DaVinci Award to the Glitter Girls from Oregon!

Team Number: 750-91137

Affiliate: Texas

Organization: Midlothian ISD

School: DMS

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: creating a bridge defying every law of physics and logic, only using a singular sheet of newspaper and a lone bobby pin.

Text:

This team's bridge defied every law of physics and logic. The Appraisers were absolutely astounded by the success of this team's simple and elegant solution to their Instant Challenge. Against all reason, against all probability, and against the collective understanding of modern engineering, this team held together its hopes, dreams, and structural integrity with nothing more than a single sheet of newspaper and one lonely bobby pin. And somehow... it worked. The Appraisers proudly award a Renaissance award to the team from Midlothian ISD.

Global Finals 2026 Special Awards

Team Number: 121-49868

Affiliate: Maine

Organization: Town of Winterport

School:

Award Kind: davinci

Recipient Type: team

For: only using rubber bands to connect 6 boards together. This effectively and creatively completed the criterion card.

Text:

The teams entire demeanor during their Instant Challenge amazed us! They creatively put rubber bands together and had them attached on boards to have the all 6 boards be connected to complete a criterion card in the Instant Challenge. It was an effective use of the materials to complete the task. None of us was sure if this would disturb the other scored structures in the Instant Challenge. We were delighted to be proven wrong!

Team Number: 175-05145

Affiliate: Ukraine

Organization: NC "JASU"

School:

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: demonstrating engineering skills on the base and suspension bridge-style supports of an amazing umbrella structure.

Text:

Creating a horizontal structure on the sides of a vertical pole is not something teams are asked to do often in Instant Challenges, but Just Shrooms applied engineering concepts and effectively used familiar materials to solve the Challenge while under a tight time constraint despite the unusual Challenge setup. This team created an amazing umbrella on a vertical pole that demonstrated well-considered structural design principals. Starting with a very stable frame made of pencils and rubber bands, the team was able to support a large umbrella coming off of the pole that was able to keep the water from falling into the bowls below. Beyond that, the team supported an additional layer of water protection below the main umbrella by using string to hold two paper plates horizontally, using similar structural principles to those behind a suspension bridge. Our Appraisal team was blown away by the engineering thought and reasoning that went in to this team's unusual structure.

Way to go, team!

Team Number: 105-29240

Affiliate: California

Organization: San Diego

School: San Diego

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: using sharp communication to build two stable towers that aligned the arrow's fin, not its point, to hit the target.

Text:

In an Instant Challenge that required teams to communicate the heights of separate towers, this three-person team quickly recognized that the arrow did not need to strike the target with its point. Through clear communication and strong teamwork, they talked through a curtain to build separate towers that were both stable and precisely aligned, allowing the arrow's flight or fin on one tower to make contact with the target on the other tower in the most efficient way possible. The Appraisers are thrilled to award a Renaissance Award to the Catastrophically Confused Caterpillars.

Team Number: 750-19908

Affiliate: Texas

Organization: Klein ISD

School: Ehrhardt Elementary

Award Kind: renaissance

Recipient Type: team

For: their pivot to a functional stick lasso, the attention to detail, and effectiveness of their device for the Challenge.

Text:

This team initially began designing a traditional lasso device. However, they quickly recognized it was not their strongest option and successfully pivoted to a stick-lasso (catchpole) design for greater control and precision.

The team engineered a handle long enough to extend beyond the taped boundary line while remaining strong and stable enough to guide the ships safely out of the tub. Throughout the design process, the team focused on creating a “lasso not too small or too big.” Their emphasis on functionality resulted in a fully adjustable and highly effective catchpole that stood out as one of the more unique and well-executed devices in the challenge.

As they tested and refined their design, the team openly discussed improvements and concerns, including one member noting they had “not practiced with a lasso before.” Despite this, the team adapted quickly, demonstrating impressive engineering, creative problem-solving, attention to detail, and innovative thinking throughout the challenge.

The Appraisers were especially impressed by the team’s willingness to rethink their original approach, refine their design collaboratively, and create a solution that was both innovative and highly functional.