



Welcome to the Newsletter for NCKSEC. This newsletter will feature student achievements, teacher achievements and news you can use to help improve student outcomes, add instructional strategies to your toolbox, and keep informed of happenings across the cooperative.

Coach, Consult, Collaborate

Teacher Tidbits

Preparing a student to self-advocate to build awareness of strengths, weaknesses and prepare to attend and participate in their IEP meeting. (from Understood.org)

Self-advocacy is an important skill in life. Below are some ways to help students advocate for themselves:

- Talk with the student about strengths and weaknesses.
- Have ongoing conversations about learning and attention issues.
- Remind the student that asking for help is a good thing.
- Praise the student's efforts at speaking up.
- Encourage the student to use classroom accommodations.
- Find a role-model, like a mentor with learning and attention issues, for the student.
- When a problem occurs, give the student the chance to solve it before stepping in.
- Let the student have a say in educational decisions.
- If the student has an IEP, encourage them to attend IEP meetings.
- Consider adding self-advocacy goals to the student's IEP.
- Teach the student about legal rights and how to talk about them in a positive, constructive way.

Self-advocacy article with [downloadable worksheets](#).

Student Showcase

Zach Barnes & Ryan Epple

Zach Barnes and Ryan Epple, eighth grade students at Thunder Ridge Middle School competed in the National Geographic Challenge as part of a team assignment in their science class. The team consisted of Zach, Ryan, and 3 other students from TRMS. Their challenge this year was to tackle the problems caused by plastics littering waterways in the United States. Around 5000 students, comprising 1100 teams across the United States entered the competition. Zach and Ryan's team was called TEAM OPPORTUNITY. Their submission was initially chosen to advance to the regional contest. Their regional contest consisted of 18 teams from Kansas, Nebraska, and Missouri. The boys and their team made a short oral presentation describing their proposed invention to tackle plastics and how they tested it to see if it would work. They were chosen as the first place winner of the regional contest and will advance to the national contest in Washington, D.C. in May. They will compete with 15 other regional teams. While there they will work with mentors on how to better their idea.

Zach and Ryan chose to meet with their team to design and plan their invention over part of their Christmas break from school. The GeoChallenge is a project based competition that empowers student teams in grades five through eight to address a critical issue and change the planet. The team was asked to create and present real-world solutions to real-world problems. The challenge this year was to learn about and take action on the urgent issue of single-use plastic pollution in our waterways. This year's theme connects to National Geographic's multiyear effort, *Planet or Plastic*, which is raising awareness about the global plastic trash crisis. TEAM OPPORTUNITY chose to invent a robot that would clean plastic off the beaches of the United States waterways before it reaches the water. Their robot is a vacuum system that will have charging stations around the beaches and will pick up plastic trash from the land compact it into cubes for easy disposal to recycling plants. They needed to come up with an idea that would rid the beaches of plastic waste, but be able to distinguish between trash and wildlife such as turtle eggs and small animals so they designed their robot with bristles

that cannot pick up those things. They also chose a part of the United States to implement their project. The team developed a cardboard model of their invention, called TRASHI, and then one team member worked with her father to create a plastic cube from plastics they melted with a torch and formed a cube to illustrate what TRASHI would do with the plastics once it picked it up from the beaches. TEAM OPPORTUNITY used a Roomba vacuum to test their hypothesis in the school library using cheerios. They then took their data and created a report and description of their invention to enter the initial contest. They also created a poster of the area they were choosing to implement their invention. TEAM OPPORTUNITY presented their project to the local Lions club and to the 6th grade class as practice for their presentation in Abilene, Kansas at the regional competition.

After being chosen to compete at regionals, TEAM OPPORTUNITY had to develop a 10-minute presentation which they presented before a panel of Nat Geo judges and filled auditorium of their competitors, sponsors, and parents. Each team member was asked to present a portion of the project to the judges. The ten-minute time limit was a difficult challenge because if they went over time they would be disqualified. But the boys and their teammates rose to the challenge and finished with 30 seconds to spare!! They were chosen by the judges as the first place team winner and they received \$1000 for their school as well as all expense paid trips to the national contest in May. The students will spend approximately one week working with mentors to better their project and present again to a panel of judges. If chosen as winner at the national competition the team will win \$25,000 and the opportunity to work with NatGeo staff to implement a prototype of their project. In preparation for the national contest TEAM OPPORTUNITY will present their project to the Phillipsburg Rotary club in April as well as implement community involvement at the school and in the area around their school through community clean ups along streets and other areas around the City of Agra. Good Luck at the national competition!



**CONGRATULATIONS, ZACH AND RYAN, FOR BEING
NCKSEC STUDENT SHOWCASE IN MAY 2019!**

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CALENDAR REMINDERS:

**END OF THE YEAR
CHECKOUT!
USE SIGNUP GENIUS**

SAVE THE DATE!

**BEGINNING OF THE YEAR
INSERVICE
MONDAY, AUGUST 5TH
HUCK BOYD**

