



SAN GABRIEL UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

MEDIA ADVISORY

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San Gabriel Unified Middle School Invention Contest Inspires Student Creativity

SAN GABRIEL, CA – Jefferson Middle School eighth-grader Kelli Ong recently created a solution to one of air travel’s most frustrating aspects: locating her belongings at the luggage claim area when everyone’s luggage looks exactly the same.

“Think of it like when you use your car alarm to find your car at the mall, it’s the same concept,” Ong said. “My family travels frequently so I’ve dealt with confusing luggage situations a lot.”

Ong’s invention, called Luggage Lites, is a luggage tag that lights up when the owner approaches their bag. The customizable lights are controlled through a Bluetooth sensor that pairs with an app on the luggage owner’s phone, which Ong coded and programmed herself.

While Luggage Lites are not available in stores, they will be among the hundreds of inventions featured at Jefferson Middle School’s second annual Invention Convention from 5 to 6 p.m. on April 26.

Invention Convention marks an end to two months of project work for more than 600 Jefferson Middle School students. More than 40 judges, including representatives from JPL and Cal Tech, will evaluate and award the most creative inventions and best presentations.

The Invention Convention was created by eighth grade language arts teacher Heather Wolpert-Gawron to implement project-based learning into the school’s curriculum. This teaching style encourages students to enjoy the process of learning by creating individual solutions to identify and solve real-world problems.

“We really feel that education, especially the middle school level, needs to be out of the box because these kids are out of the box,” Wolpert-Gawron said. “Middle schoolers need visual learning, they need hands-on learning, and they need meaningful learning – they aren’t just going to learn just because they want a good grade. There has to be an attachment to meaningful learning.”

MORE

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Students utilized science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) aspects to complete their projects, including using 3D printers for making their prototypes and final products, writing computer code, creating websites, shooting and editing video footage for commercials, drafting business letters to potential buyers and creating catchy slogans or musical product jingles.

“I’ve never seen any project like this, it is not an ordinary science fair,” Ong said. “We were able to make whatever we wanted and it was interesting because I looked at my idea and I thought ‘how do I make this work?’ So I liked having a project where I was able to take an impossible idea and make it happen.”

Ong also attributes her newfound interest and future career aspirations in writing computer code to the Invention Convention project.

“Our District believes educational opportunities like Invention Convention can teach students the personal and professional skills vital to lifelong success,” SGUSD Superintendent Dr. John Pappalardo said. “The astounding creativity and impressive problem-solving skills demonstrated in these inventions reflect the value of the rigorous and innovative academic programs that San Gabriel Unified is proud to offer.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

042017_SANGAB_INVENTION: Jefferson Middle School eight-grader poses with her Luggage Lites invention, provides a solution to one of air travel’s most frustrating aspects. Ong’s product is one of hundreds that will be on display at Jefferson Middle School’s second annual Invention Convention on April 26, an event that celebrates student innovation.

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