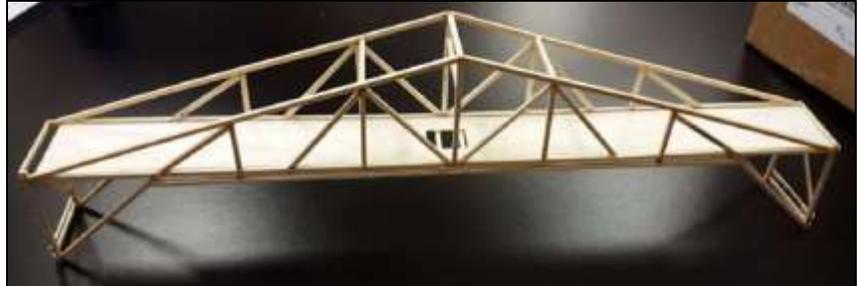


Franklin Academy Middle School Model Bridge Building Team

By Jacob Faulkner

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The Franklin Academy Middle School bridge-building team started as a vision in the eyes of a Franklin Academy senior in the summer of 2015. This vision slowly became a reality that fall when that senior sent out a request to middle school students who would like to join a team focused on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) principles.



The Franklin Academy Middle School bridge-building team finished second in the 2015 regional competition with its model king post truss bridge, inspired by the Golden Gate Bridge.

This isn't an article to focus on the accomplishments of one man, but it is an article that reflects upon the accomplishments of that team.

This team started as a project, but it evolved into a life-changing experience. This team was primarily manned by six brave students (Elijah Duncan, Marquise Harris, Logan Brewer, Lauren Garrett, Owen McDonald and Anthony Caudill) who took a chance to join the program.



From these six students, we started running. We brainstormed ideas on what bridge we wanted to model our bridge after. The creativity flowed from there, and we decided that we would model our bridge after the Golden Gate Bridge. We, then, had to turn this bridge into a reality.

The senior taught the students how to design the bridge on Google SketchUp, so we started by creating a model of our bridge and then constructed our bridge based on our model. My middle school students cut, glued and sanded their way to a model king post truss bridge. These kids learned the engineering concepts behind building a bridge, and they wrote an essay that exemplified their knowledge.

They also performed an excellent rendition of Star Wars modified to suit a bridge building competition. This process not only made science enjoyable, but it allowed for the students to gain a better understanding for science based on hands-on experience. They received the priceless wisdom obtained with experience, and this will greatly benefit them in their STEM pursuits in the future.

In their inaugural season, they finished in second place in the regional competition at NCDOT, and I expect to see them winning their region in the next couple of years. These opportunities can all be accredited to the NCDOT for hosting a program that reaches out to the needs of the up and coming generation.