



Richardson ISD completed their twenty-ninth annual Invention Convention on November 2, 2013. This event provides a unique opportunity for students of all ages to express new ideas in creative and meaningful ways. In 2013, we had 37 schools participate with over 650 students taking part in the inventive thinking process and displaying their work at school-level competitions. There were also 96 entries from students from kindergarten through the eighth grade that went on to our district competition at Berkner High School. We anticipate great participation for this event once again next year.

The students are able to think “out of the box” to devise their inventions, but they will still be interviewed by judges and assessed on the following criteria:

- Uniqueness
- Usefulness
- Research
- Construction/Design
- Effectiveness of Display
- Salesmanship

At the district level, we are fortunate to have judges from a variety of backgrounds, including RISD educators, students from the UTD McDermott Scholars, Terry Scholars, Alpha Phi Omega, and Chemistry Student Association, as well as professionals from many prestigious firms who volunteered their time. This year, we also had the mayor pro tem of Richardson as a judge. Our judges determine outstanding district entries who are awarded medals as grade level winners. Inventors who exhibit special creativity and originality receive a certificate designated as the Rube Goldberg Award (named for the famous cartoonist famed for his depictions of elaborate inventions).

Additionally, there are some Special Area award winners each year. Kendal Hartley, a Richardson city council member, sponsors the “Most Altruistic” winners and provides a special gift to those inventors. The Richardson Environmental Action League determines the “Best Environmentally-Related Invention,” and that inventor receives a monetary gift from the League. The Original Pancake House sponsors the “Best Food Related Invention” and provides gifts from their restaurants for selected students. The Arapaho Road Animal Clinic selects the “Most Pet Friendly” winners and awards those students with a monetary gift. The Container Store awards special certificates and gift cards to the best examples of inventions in the “Storage and Organization” category. Radio Shack sponsors the “Most Innovative Invention” awards, and representatives award winning entries with brand-new products that represent the Radio Shack brand. Baker Botts sends several attorneys in their intellectual property practice to select one invention they find the “Most Patentable.” This is an enormous reward as the attorneys will interview the student at their offices, prepare all portions of the patent application, and conduct all correspondence with the U.S. Patent Office. This process usually takes about three years, and the firm’s total investment of resources is around \$20,000 or more. A handful of inventors over the years have even had a U.S. patent delivered to them! Finally, at the district competition, all of the students view each others’ inventions and vote to determine the “Best in Show” winners.

These students have a wonderful opportunity to learn authentic, higher-level skills, and to discover manners in which to create solutions to problems. It has been a truly enjoyable event for all and we anticipate continued successes for all students involved.