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Student Teams Win Awards at Regional Robotics Competition

Student teams from Crescent Elementary and Yorba Middle Schools qualified to move on to the VEX IQ State Robotics Championship after competing in a regional competition. The two teams from Crescent Elementary won the award for Top Alliance in the Teamwork competition. A team from Crescent also won the overall Build Award. Teams from Yorba Middle School won the award for Top Programming and the Overall Excellence Award.

The VEX IQ Regional Competition, which drew 36 student teams from throughout Southern California, was held February 2 at the Irvine Ranch Outdoor Education Center.

The VEX IQ Challenge, presented by the Robotics Education & Competition Foundation, is a new STEM program for elementary and middle school students (ages 8-14). Students, with guidance from their teachers and mentors, build a robot using the VEX IQ robotics platform to solve an engineering challenge that is presented in the form of a game. VEX IQ Challenge teams work together scoring points in Teamwork Matches, and display their robot's skills individually in driver-controlled and autonomous Skills Challenges. In addition to building robots, the VEX IQ Challenge encourages students to learn about science, technology, engineering and mathematics with a STEM themed research project that consists of a written or media presentation.

Student teams from eight other Orange Unified Schools also participated in the event: Anaheim Hills, Cambridge, Cerro Villa, Handy, McPherson, Nohl Canyon, Panorama, and Sycamore. The OUSD teams ranged from third to eighth grade students, with three to 30 students on each team. Led by volunteer OUSD teachers, the teams built and programmed their robots, and completed Engineering Design Notebooks, research projects and STEM projects that were judged at the event. Teams also participated in district scrimmages on November 17 and January 24.

The event drew enthusiastic responses from parents, teachers and students.

"It was brilliant to see our Orange Unified students having such a great time creating innovative robots, communicating to problem solve, and collaboratively working as a team, both within their own team as well as working with other teams when competing," said Jeremy Mortensen, principal at Cambridge Elementary. "It was a wonderful opportunity for students, parents, teachers, and administrators alike to come together and support our future engineers and professionals who will represent Orange Unified far beyond their years as students in our district. I was truly proud of all of them!"

"I heard some parents talking about how their kids come home from school still talking about their robots and their teams," said Kathy Martin, principal at Panorama Elementary. "I also heard a parent say that she and her husband did not mind missing the Superbowl for such a unique and exciting competition."