



PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS

IN CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT

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Sacramento-Area Students Win 2nd Place in National Model Bridge-Building Contest

Middle schoolers take prize as first-ever representatives from California

Portland, Maine – Professional Engineers in California Government ([PECG](#)) announced today that a team of Sacramento-area middle-school students took 2nd place in a nationwide model-bridge contest that pitted their structure against those of other 7th and 8th graders from around the country.

Tai Hackett, Griffin Starr and Ansel Tucker, who attend Emerson Junior High School, Holmes Junior High School and da Vinci Charter Academy, designed and built a bridge from wood that weighed just 13 grams – roughly the weight of 13 small paper clips -- yet held 67 pounds before it cracked.

The group won \$900 and a place in history as the first representatives from California to the TRAC Bridge Challenge's 15th annual competition. A record 18 teams – six of them from middle schools -- competed this year, selected from more than 250 teams that applied from across the country. Students from Northville, Mich., took 1st Place in the middle-school division.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials ([AASHTO](#)) organized the Portland event, which is the culminating competition each year for middle- and high-school students from around the country. Many hone their bridge designs in state competitions.

“This was a terrific experience for our kids,” said Dave Hackett, the faculty advisor for the California team. “It was an inspiring week that changed the lives of students forever.”

PECG sponsored the California competition earlier this year that launched Team Hackett-Starr-Tucker to national prominence.

The California contingent's path to national victory began at [the January state competition in Sacramento-area](#) that mirrored this week's contest: Using professional design software, students built model bridges from balsa wood and glue, and then subjected their models to a closely monitored stress test to the point of collapse. They also were graded on presentations made before an expert panel.

After winning the state middle-school division, the California team applied to the national contest. AASHTO selected their project, then paid the travel and lodging expenses for the students and their faculty advisor. The event ended Wednesday.

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Professional Engineers in California Government (PECG) represents 13,000 state-employed engineers and related professionals responsible for designing and inspecting California's infrastructure, improving air and water quality and developing clean energy and green technology.

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