Agriculture and Biotechnology Design

All notebooks were of good quality. Students should be sure to check spelling. The displays were very good this year. The print quality of pictures and graphics was better than last year. Models that were presented were creative. Students should practice and know information for the interview/presentation. Make sure two people appear at the interview.

Career Prep

Several letters were formatted incorrectly. There were quite a few students who failed to submit their resume and cover letters in folders. Some were very creative but not consistent throughout the whole process. Most resumes were neat. None of the students completed the application entirely and accurately. Eye contact should be made with judges, instead of with the ground/air. Prepared introductions would help. Good things: pulling up a chair, an even and calm voice, a business card, handshakes, eye contact, asking a question of interviewers, expanding on answers. Things to improve: loud sighing, stammering (uh, well, etc.), overuse of word "definitely," lack of eye contact and handshakes, twiddling with hair or face. More research would produce longer and better answers. Rules violations: no folders, application completed in pencil.

Challenging Technology Issues

Students should be poised, articulate, and display confidence and ready knowledge of subject. There should be a clear order and sequence to their position (pro or con). They should have a clear opening argument, supported by evidence (avoid unsubstantiated assertions) and a concluding summary. They should refer to the arguments of their opponents, and be gracious but differ in their positions clearly. Avoid words that are fillers, such as "and stuff like that." Students should prepare numerous times before the competition so they don't go under OR over time. All students read directly from their notecards and used a lot of words they didn't know the meaning of -- and their partners couldn't rebut correctly because they also didn't know the meaning of the words. Students should work on having a solid understanding of basic public speaking and debating techniques.

Communications Challenge

Students need to read the general rules. Entries must have a cover page. A photo release form is required for all persons in a photograph. Do not use copyrighted material without written permission (comics, graphics, other company logos, etc.). Consider the readability of text when choosing fonts and colors. Consider not using a template (three of the entries used the exact same template). Many beautiful entries lost points due to the use of copyrighted material without permission. Check spelling and grammar. The participant's name should not be included on the entry. A great job was done on design (overall) and creative writing.

Construction Challenge

Some rules violations were noted. Other issues: too many pages, incorrect size display, sloppiness, evidence of non-student work (LOTS of help from advisors).

Digital Photography

Students need to completely address the theme in the theme statement. One or two sentences don't sufficiently describe the theme or editing techniques used. Three or four paragraphs are appropriate.

The quality of the albums was good. However, students need to follow the album layout and editing instructions very carefully to make the semifinals and finals. Good photographic techniques are needed first and foremost. Editing cannot take the place of a good, quality original photograph that has a distinct subject/focus that clearly fits the theme. Students need to be ready to perform the on-site task without advisor help. They should know their equipment, software and how to use it effectively. Students who knew good photographic techniques and were very familiar with their cameras and editing software did the best. All photographs and work must be completed during the current year, have complete albums with all required elements included, and must be done/edited ethically.

Dragster
The majority of dragsters were good to excellent.

Engineering Structure
Many rules violations could be avoided if students read the rules. Students did not remember to add two inches to the span.

Environmental Focus
Students should work on grammar, use proper words, and avoid copyright mishaps. Students should not read a paper to judges, but report to them instead. Many had great information but little creativity. Most displays were very good. A few participants had issues with unprepared laptops. Poise, posture, and eye contact are important (many were lacking in these areas).

Flight
Be aware of ALL general rules! Watch copyright infringement. The glider that is built should match plans.

Go Green Manufacturing
There was a lack of compilation of written documentation in most notebooks. Students should follow required documentation sequence. Points were deducted because directions weren't followed properly. Some notebooks did not have completed information in each category. Some notebooks did not clearly state the function of the entered product. Many projects had almost perfect scores in the craftsmanship category, as well as in the areas of product solution and function. Some entries lost points for not stating safety hazards of product or lacking complete information on advertisements. Quality control could have been better. Several entries were not submitted with two models of their product.

Graphic Design
Students must follow the guidelines for the TSA logo, paper type, and size of the graphic.

Inventions and Innovations
Copyrights were a problem, as were grammar mistakes. Submissions ranged from underdeveloped products to marketable products. Several students failed to keep their multimedia presentations between two and four minutes.

Leadership Strategies
Handwriting and neatness is very important, as is creativity on displays. Be sure to get the point across, be confident, and make eye contact. Poise and eye contact need improvement. Some were very creative – some needed LOTS more creativity. A good variety of solutions were presented for the onsite problem!

Lights, Camera, Action
Entries should include MLA citation as stated in general rules for any music clips used (research "free use" to be clear when citing). No screen shots are allowed for storyboard! Need to use correct terminology in describing shots, transitions, etc. Format the entry according to the rules. Students need to work on sound quality. More camera angles/action shots would improve entries. More creative fonts should be used.

Medical Technology Issues
Keep the entries simple. Work hard on use of resources and copyright. If a resource cannot be cited – do not use it. READ the rules over and over again. Keep the display simple and clean. Do not paste the research paper on the display. Use titles only and limited text for the entry. Red font is extremely difficult to read, as is white font on a dark background. Compare the display to a billboard on a highway. Practice for the presentation. Pay attention to the dress code – a polo shirt is not business dress.

Multimedia Production
Many submissions failed to provide the statement/proof of authorship and/or the photo/video release forms. A great many entries were disqualified because they failed to provide ANY documentation whatsoever. Rule violations included use of copyright–protected works, including music and photos. Notebooks ranged from excellent to non-existent. Generally, entries that included thorough notebooks had better presentations. Most students need to prepare better for a formal presentation by addressing key points outlined in the score sheet; students need to work on poise, posture and eye contact. Students should carefully read the rules for the documentation /notebook. Students should understand that the purchase of a song on the internet does not mean that permission is given to use it in a video.

Prepared Speech
More interaction with visual aids would make for a better speech. Visuals are important for creativity points. Students should show passion, make eye contact and know their speech. Judges need to be able to see posters, pictures, etc. Pictures for displays should be at least 4 x 6 inches or larger, without much white space. Students should test a prop with an easel or whatever will be used. If it doesn't "flow" or work correctly, change it or adapt it to work better. An individual giving a speech should NOT read it; it does not show the judges that the student knows the material, and it makes the speech boring; side effects are that the student then fails to make eye contact and a lack of confidence is displayed. A few speeches were less than three minutes in length.

Robot TOBOR
It was clear which teams spent time on completing their notebook, because requirements were met and the notebooks were very detailed. Many teams did poorly on all aspects of the notebook -- which suggested that notebooks may have been done quickly. Most notebooks included citations for resources copied. Some teams displayed good creativity and requirements for appearance. In general, entries were satisfactory for middle school level students. Personal appearance was good. Students should turn off batteries when checking in entries.

System Control Technology
The solutions were varied and showed the critical thinking process in action.

Tech Bowl
Some students were not in professional attire for the written test.

Techno Talk
Overall it was great to watch the communication between participants. The models were what were expected, considering the materials available and the time constraints. Overall the interviews were excellent and insightful. Some were even very entertaining and fun. One piece of advice for students would be to not argue between each other in front of the judges! There were no violations.

Transportation Challenge
Students did a great job overall. The designs were very good; students took the design process seriously. More attention should be paid to safety violations, covered block housing, and labeled on-off switches.

TSA Cup: Marine Design Challenge
Most binders were very well done. Weak area seemed to fall to the working drawings. Three or four entries showed evidence of last minute work. The quality of about half of the entries was excellent; others seemed quickly done with little evidence of testing. Boats showed imagination, but not engineering; not many had any type of gear box. Hydrodynamics was not a consideration for the design of most entries. Pre-testing is highly recommended. Violations seemed to be heavy in one or two rules: A-8 and B3.

Web Site Design
Teams should include the school name on the website so that judges can identify the site with the appropriate team number. Teams need to make sure that the site works in multiple browsers on both PC and Mac. If outside sources are used (such as videos or flash) and embedded, then credit needs to be given on the applicable page. For the interview, teams should include a screen shot of their website for better understanding of explanation. All members of a team must be in the correct TSA attire. Students should not copy/paste Wikipedia articles or other such research sites.

Write Now! Technical Writing
There were many good entries. It was apparent that many students keep up with current events that relate to technology-oriented subject matter.

Zap It! Electrical Applications
Students should practice for the interview, working on answers to how, what, why questions. If a student can't answer a question, it is better for him/her to admit it, rather than guess. Students should know how to use the DMM they bring to the site (and, bring a second DMM/spare fuse just in case)! Students should make their breadboard as neat as possible – it makes it easy to troubleshoot. Some did not bring test instruments, or were unfamiliar with test instruments and fared poorly on the test measurements section.