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Press Release: SchoolAccess Participates in Inaugural FIRST LEGO League Virtual Tournament

Remote Alaskan Students Enjoy First Simulated Competition Field

DECEMBER 13, 2011, ANCHORAGE – GCI SchoolAccess partnered with FIRST LEGO League (FLL) to bring teams from across Alaska into a virtual regional qualifier tournament via video conferencing last week. This is the first time the FLL tournament has had an entire field of competitors that were virtual participants.

FLL is intended to excite students about math and science and teach critical-thinking, team-building and presentation skills by introducing nine- to fourteen-year-old students to real-world engineering challenges. Guided by their imaginations and adult coaches, teams of three to 10 students discover exciting career possibilities and learn to make positive contributions to society by building LEGO-based robots to complete tasks on a thematic playing surface.

GCI SchoolAccess provided FLL with the video conferencing to support the virtual judging facility, providing rural Alaskan students with the opportunity to compete virtually in the competition without the burden of travel costs. In addition, GCI staff participated in the judging process.

During the virtual tournament, teams prepared projects, designed robots and presented their projects to judges before competing against one another in three rounds of robot competitions. Judges met individually with teams to evaluate project design, core values and robot designs.

"Careful planning by GCI SchoolAccess and our partners meant that remote schools were able to battle head-to-head with their opponent," said Missy Fraze, program manager, GCI SchoolAccess. "The culminating event was the robot competition where teams challenged each other in a sequence of programmed missions in a virtual environment."



(Left) Judges, Ron Hale and Annie Bieber, watch a Core Values presentation from one of the schools. (Center) Judges left to right, Bryan Hawkins, Eric Knapp, Ron

Hale, Gigi Palma, Annie Bieber, Matt Crawford. (Right) Students hang out, prepping and practicing while waiting for their next competition.

About GCI SchoolAccess

GCI SchoolAccess combines rich education experience with advanced technology to provide individualized, on-demand learning solutions that enable anytime, anywhere learning. Through our commitment to education, we help students succeed in work and life in the 21st century. Visit www.schoolaccess.net for more information.