Central Jersey 8th-graders eye futuristic cities

By ERICA HARRATIN
STAFF WRITER

It is the year 2045. Islands are propped up by nanotechnology-coated pillars in the sea and a central control center will warn politicians long before any levees break.

Such is life in the futuristic cities developed by teams of eighth-graders at South Brunswick's Linwood Middle School, which will compete in the Future City Competition at Rutgers University today.

Teams from more than 20 different schools statewide will convene at the Busch Campus Center today to show off their cities, which were born out of SimCity 3000 and evolved into scale-size models made from recyclable materials.

Five teams from Linwood and eight from Iselin Middle School have entered cities in the competition, which aims to help students understand the types of cities that will be built in the future.

Some cities in the competition, which defines strict rules about which cities qualify. Cities must exist in 2040 or later and have at least 50,000 residents; the city tax rate must be 8 percent or lower; city residents must have a life expectancy of at least 60; pollution levels must be under 16 percent; and the city infrastructure must incorporate some form of nanotechnology.

In other words, said Michael, "We used (nanotechnology) to monitor the trash bins so they don't break."

That essay is worth 15 points in the competition, which accounts for a little more than 15 percent of the total possible points. Also scored in the competition is the computer design, which is the city model, the city abstract, and an oral presentation.

Linwood has entered five teams of three in the competition, which is a pared-down version of the 55 pupils who couldn't make their SimCity-created cities meet the necessary criteria.

Eight teams of three from Iselin Middle School submitted entries, down from 49 pupils who started the competition.

"They would stay after school Monday through Thursday and then I would have some groups working on it at lunch," said Lisa Lubarsky, the teacher in charge of Iselin's teams.

"I just think overall it was impressive, because we are under a time crunch every time there's a deadline — just the fact that these kids can pull everything together last minute," Lubarsky added, citing the tight time constraints of the project.

"It's been so much fun and so entertaining," said I think the kids get a lot out of it.

Winners of the state competition advance to the national finals during National Engineers Week next month.