

New Hampshire School Administrators Association

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Spotlighting Excellence: NHSAA Recognizes Jennie D. Blake School Students Who Won National Dam Model Competition



From left, Riley Dill, Madison Lloyd, Isabella Mills, and Caleb White present at the Association of State Dam Safety Officials' (ASDSO) Dam Model Competition. Students, their parents, and staff presented at ASDSO's annual Dam Safety Conference in Denver. (Photo Courtesy New Hampshire School Administrators Association)

During the summer, four students at the Jennie D. Blake School in Hill built a tabletop model of the Franklin Falls Dam and developed a plan to educate the public about dam safety.

Their exceptional project earned them first place in the elementary school division of the Association of State Dam Safety Officials' (ASDSO) Dam Model Competition. Students, their parents, and staff presented at ASDSO's annual Dam Safety Conference in Denver in September.

The winning Grade 5 and 6 students – Riley Dill, Madison Lloyd, Isabella Mills, and Caleb White – faculty, and staff shared their recent accomplishment with members of the state Board of Education at their Thursday, Oct. 10 meeting.

The students who built the model were guided by Briana Edwards, a Natural Resource Specialist and Ranger with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers who works primarily at the Franklin Falls Dam.

Students were supported by Superintendent-Principal Brian Connelly. Hill preschool parent and ASDSO member Josh Gilman shared his knowledge and expertise. Local model train enthusiast Dave Sias offered critical advice on landscape design to create a realistic model.

The dam plays an integral role in the history and day-to-day life of the Hill community. In 1938 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined a dam and reservoir were needed in Franklin to protect the region from flooding of the Pemigewasset River. The project would have wiped out the town. Instead, in 1940 and 1941 Hill residents purchased land and created a new village including a Town Hall and Jennie D. Hill School. (The school moved to the Town Hall building in 2001.)

Today the Franklin Dam provides safety and numerous recreational opportunities to the region.

Each student received a medal, and the school received a plaque commemorating the win.

"The students' model attracted significant attention, with attendees praising their work and asking insightful questions," Superintendent-Principal Connelly said. "The students engaged with the public with impressive maturity, making the experience even more memorable. Several attendees were so impressed that they offered the students potential future employment opportunities in fields related to dam design, construction, and maintenance."

ASDSO provided a \$2,500 travel stipend, but the students' trip was a true community effort. A parent created a community GoFundMe campaign that raised \$3,200 in just a few days. Remaining costs were generously covered by a Hill resident.

"Thank you to Briana, Josh, Dave, and the many people in our community who gave our students a once-in-a-lifetime learning experience," Superintendent-Principal

Connelly said.

Students also attended a special showcase event at the school on Thursday, Oct. 3, where they shared their project and experiences with the community.

"Congratulations to the Jennie D. Blake students on an incredible achievement. Not only did they work hard, but they also received an impressive level of support from their entire community," NHSAA Executive Director Mark MacLean said. "This dedication, innovation, and pursuit of excellence can be found in schools across the state, no matter how big or small."

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Students from the Jennie D. Blake School showed off their award-winning project on Oct. 3 at the school. First row, from left, Riley Dill, Madison Lloyd, Isabella Mills, and Caleb White. Second row: Superintendent-Principal Brian Connelly, Ranger Briana Edwards, and parent Josh Gilman. Not shown: Dave Sias. (Photo Courtesy New Hampshire School Administrators Association)

A message from the New Hampshire School Administrators Association

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