



WORDMASTERS

Five teams of students representing St. Francis of Assisi School recently won highest honors in the WordMasters Challenge—a national language arts competition entered by over 220,000 students annually, which consists of three separate meets held at intervals during the school year.

Competing in the difficult Blue Division of the Challenge, the school's fourth graders placed **twelfth in the nation** in the year-end cumulative standings among 698 school teams participating at this grade level and in this division. At the same time, the school's fifth graders placed **fifth in the nation** among 706 competing teams, its sixth graders placed **third in the nation** among 403 teams, its seventh graders placed **ninth in the nation** among 294 teams, and its eighth graders tied for **eleventh place in the nation** among 302 teams. The teams were coached by Emily Sales, Pam Conway, and Paula Do.

Eight of the school's students won highest honors for year-long individual achievement as well: Fourth graders Ruthie Belza and Ellie Hummel both placed among the 16 highest-scoring fourth graders in the nation in the year-end cumulative standings, while sixth graders Analisa Conway and Timothy Willis both placed among the 19 highest-ranked sixth graders, seventh grader Cassie Drury among the 18 highest-ranked seventh graders, and eighth grader Thomas Ostertag among the 14 highest-ranked eighth graders. Most exceptionally, sixth grader Luca Sanchez and eighth grader Jeremy Borden both earned perfect scores in all three of the year's meets. In the entire country only four sixth graders and only two eighth graders achieved at this level.

In addition, several of the school's students won highest honors for individual achievement in the year's final meet, held in April: Fourth graders Ruthie Belza and Ellie Hummel, fifth graders Ellie Dunham, Liam Gray, Deke Hook, Jack Hummel, and Nina Render, sixth graders Sam Belza, Analisa Conway, Luca Sanchez, and Erica White, seventh graders Cassie Drury, William Meyer, and Holly Zoeller, and eighth graders Jeremy Borden, Katie Harris, and Thomas Ostertag all earned perfect scores in this meet, while nationwide only 55 fourth graders, only 131 fifth graders, only 110 sixth graders, only 62 seventh graders, and only 34 eighth graders did so.

The WordMasters Challenge is an exercise in critical thinking that first encourages students to become familiar with a set of interesting new words (considerably harder than grade level), and then challenges them to use those words to complete analogies expressing various kinds of relationships. Working to solve the Challenge analogies helps students learn to think both analytically and metaphorically. Though most vocabulary-boosting and analogy-solving activities have been created for high school students, the WordMasters materials have been specifically designed for younger students, in grades three through eight. They are particularly well suited for able and interested children, who rise to the challenge of learning new words and enjoy the logical puzzles posed by analogies.

The WordMasters Challenge has been administered for the past 25 years by a company based in Allendale, New Jersey, which is dedicated to inspiring high achievement in American schools. Now that all three of the year's meets have been completed, medals and certificates will be awarded to those students who achieved and/or improved the most in the course of the year.