Question A: What is the main currency of India?

Question B: What is the longest day of the year?

Question C: True or False: The Northern Hemisphere of the world is made up of more water than the Southern Hemisphere.

Try to think of an answer to one of these questions in 15 seconds or less.

BUZZ.

Then use the same amount of time to come up with the next answer.

BUZZ.

And the next.

BUZZ.

Once your brain begins to feel like a ping-pong ball, you might have a taste of what it's like to compete on a junior- or senior-high quiz bowl team.

Gothenburg eighth-grader Carson Messersmith likes the academic challenge of quiz bowl.

And you have to be quick.

"You have to be ready to go from the first minute you start competition," Carson said.

**QUIZ BOWL**

Quiz bowls are organized by National Academic Quiz Tournaments for junior high, high school and college students.

Similar to what you would see on a game show, groups of students compete against other teams in timed rounds. Students use buzzers to answer questions.

Many secondary and higher education facilities organize quiz bowls in their schools with winners going to regional, state, national and international tournaments.

Subjects generally covered in quiz bowls include: geography, religion, mythology, science, philosophy, math, literature, history and fine arts.

(Source: quiz.lovetoknow.com)

Jessica Schmidt agreed, noting that kids who play a lot of video games have an advantage because they are used to clicking—fast.

"It's not fair, " Schmidt said with a laugh.

Schmidt enjoys the tournament at the end of the season which—this year—will be March 8 at the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

"It's a challenge to see how we'll do against other people," Schmidt said.

During the competition, two teams of six members each compete standing at a table with buzzers.

A judge asks a “toss-up” question about geography, religion, mythology, science, philosophy, math, literature, history or fine arts.

The first team member who hits a buzzer and answers the question correctly receives five points for the team.

If an answer is incorrect, the other team gets a chance to answer.

Teams also get a bonus question, worth 10 points, in which members can confer with each other before answering in 15 seconds or less.

If it’s a math question, paper and pencil can be used but only on bonus questions.

After a certain number of questions are answered and answered correctly, the team with the most points wins.

Teresa Messermith, K-2 principal and special education co-director, coaches the team.

Teresa said balance is key to coaching.

“You don’t want them to guess at answers all the time but you also don’t want to inhibit their willingness to try and answer a question,” she explained. “I try to validate the right answers.”

Teresa also has to try and find a time to practice which is usually from 7-7:45 a.m. twice a week.

Her goal is to get the team through as many practice questions as possible—complete with experience using buzzers—to provide a realistic competitive setting.

“I want them exposed to a variety of questions,” she said. “I also want them to understand how quiz bowl works.”

Most students who compete build confidence to speak comfortably in front of peers, adults and at competition, Teresa said.

“It also increases their overall knowledge and strengthens them academically,” she explained.

Schmidt described competition as nerve wracking because “all the people are watching you.”

Carson said he stares at the buzzer or another focal point to focus and prevent nervousness.

To become a member of quiz bowl, students grades six through eight must be recommended by a teacher or recognized as a high ability learner.

They then must take a test and score high enough to be invited to join.

Teresa coached quiz bowl while at Eustis-Farnam Public Schools for 11 years and four years in Gothenburg.

For her, it’s exciting to see kids compete academically.

“There are not many opportunities for students who are academically strong to shine and perform,” Teresa said. “This is an avenue for them to do that.”

It’s also rewarding, she said, to see kids having fun competing academically as they work their brains.

Trenton Long, an eighth grader, likes the challenge of doing something he doesn’t normally get to do during a regular school day.

Because team members have different strengths in terms of knowledge base, Carson said there’s a lot the team can accomplish.

“You can go from trivia to geography to history to science to English,” he said, noting that his favorite areas are geography and history.

Sixth grader Gage Taylor likes military history while Schmidt is more into English.

“I read to the point I don’t get other stuff done like homework,” she said.

Carson recommends the activity to kids who enjoy trivia and challenges and who want to learn more about the world around them.

“Quiz bowl works your brain in every aspect,” he said. “It will make you a better student and more well rounded.”

In Teresa’s mind, good quiz bowl competitors learn confidence and are willing to take a risk.

Answer A: Rupee

Answer B: On or around June 21, also known as the Summer Solstice.

Answer C: False. The Southern Hemisphere has more water because its northern counterpart is made up of more land.

ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com 308-537-3636