

## Rube Goldberg would be proud

**Science - A Vancouver student's cucumber-seed planting machine impresses Gov. Gregoire**

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VANCOUVER -- Seventh-grader Justine Schoolfield had never met a governor before and confessed her upcoming encounter made her nervous.

Not just that, the 12-year-old fretted about whether her multi-step, cucumber-seed planting machine would perform as designed.

No worries on either score.

Schoolfield's contraption -- a combination of pulleys, weights, string, water tubing, welded parts and a tub of dirt -- met expectations.

Her machine was one of five "Rube Goldberg Inventions" that Covington Middle School science students displayed Thursday for a visit by Gov. Chris Gregoire. The governor visited the school as a follow-up to Monday's release of her education task force's glossy "Washington Learns" report.

Before taking a look at each of the five inventions, Gregoire talked to a gathering of school officials and parents about the report.

Among its many recommendations, it urges the state "to really step up when it comes to science," Gregoire said, "and be able to, one, have fun at it, not be afraid of it, (and two) understand how important it is and realize if our students are going to compete, science is essential for them."

She visited Covington, in the Orchards area, partly because the school's eighth-grade science scores improved 12 percent between 2005 and 2006 on a statewide assessment test.

The task force report says math and science instruction statewide is one of the areas needing change. Other areas include early learning, personalized learning, college and work force training, and quality and accountability.

On a day when budget forecasters said the state can expect \$49 million more in revenue in the next 21/2 years than originally predicted, Gregoire said of the education plan: "We've gotta have a significant financial down payment," though later she declined to specify how much.

That was after she had taken a look at Schoolfield's complicated cucumber-seed planting machine. Each of the five contraptions combined physics and simple tools, said instructor Brad Holten.

Schoolfield told the governor that her uncle, who has a degree in physics, helped her design and weld the project.

"That helps, right?" Gregoire asked, laughing.

And with a flick of her finger, Schoolfield set in motion the planting process.

"Well done, well done," the governor told the student. "Good job."