

Title of Session: FIRST Robotics

Moderator: Patricia Chen

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Room: FIRST Robotics Group

KathieK: Oops, I'm not sure they have been released yet, but I don't see any harm in it.

KathieK: Vex is like a "giant erector set".

PatriciaCh: VEX is an more advanced set

KathieK: It was formerly distributed by Radio Shack. Some parts may still be found in RS stores

KathieK: Teachers like it because it's small, and affordable, and can be kept in a closet at school easily

SherylM: Ok, I see them

KathieK: Vex will be entering its third year as a pilot program in FIRST robotics.

NancyJK: I think our students really liked the VEX kits and robot this past year.

PatriciaCh: RS stores do not have the VEX kits....it was sent back

SherylM: Yes, I can see that they could do quite a bit more with the VEX

KathieK: Most people who have tried it love it. My son borrowed the team's kit to do a demo, built a functioning robot in a few hours. Now we have our own set

KathieK: Some RS still carry leftover parts - we got ours here in CT at half price through RS.

PatriciaCh: okay.....ours were told to ship it back

KathieK: If you ask, they can check other store's inventory (we discovered this by accident) - we were explaining the entire product and FVC program to our local RS employees.

KathieK: Anyway, the cost for registering a Vex team is under \$300, with additional fees for attending Vex tournaments. Those will vary by tournament.

NancyJK: You could also try Radioshack.com or their website as I think that is where David got some of our parts.

KathieK: The tournaments will be listed on the FVC website (www.usfirst.com) in September.

KathieK: I came in late, Sheryl, where are you located?

SherylM: I live in SE Kansas

SherylM: These kits look the old erector sets

SherylM: with brains

PatriciaCh: Yes they do....students can cut them....customize their robot

KathieK: I'm not sure if there are any tournaments for Vex slated for that area of the country or not. If interested in finding out more about the program, complete the form at <https://my.usfirst.org/fvc/> and you will be added to a distribution list for more information as it becomes available.

SherylM: The computer looks like the lego brick

KathieK: Middle school students can also use Vex kits successfully; FIRST has intended its Vex program to be for high school students.

PatriciaCh: the LEGO is putting out a new set of bricks as well.....the old RCX are being faced out

SherylM: Are these units wireless?

PatriciaCh: yes

NancyJK: VEX programming is controlled by Easy C by Intellitec

PatriciaCh: Students have to program the robots.....each one uses a different language

KathieK: A great fun video by a local CT team can be found at <http://www.team228.org/index/multimedia/vex-goes-to-the-mall.wmv> - they took their Vex bot to the mall one day while demonstrating their large robot!

KathieK: Easy C is a drag-and-drop programming language so anyone can learn it easily.

KathieK: One of our friends just received the new Mindstorms kit tonight and was anxious to dig into it!

PatriciaCh: Let me know how they like it....I ordered to NXT for the school team

KathieK: We were just explaining some of the FIRST programs to Sheryl. Can we answer any questions you might have?

SusanR joined the room.

KathieK: Hello Susan.

SusanR: Hi Kathie

PatriciaCh: Hello

PatriciaCh: Susan...are you a teacher?

KathieK: Susan, are you a visitor or a FIRST participant? Can we answer any questions?

SusanR wishes to lurk for a short while

PatriciaCh: ok

KathieK: For our visitors, the FIRST website is full of information - www.usfirst.org - about all of the programs for ages 6-18.

KathieK: If you go to the Media Center section you can download brochures about each program.

KristenK: Wow, what a crew

KathieK: Hi Kristen

PatriciaCh: hello Kristen

KristenK: Hey

KristenK: sorry, apparently I have some technical issues

PatriciaCh: The FIRST program is terrific on any level.... it shows application of what they have learned but through hands on

KathieK: The FIRST Junior LEGO League is for ages 6-8; FIRST LEGO League is for 9-14; FIRST Vex Challenge is for 14-18 and FIRST Robotics Competition is also for high school students.

NancyJK: Emily, are you a science teacher?

EmilyW: no

EmilyW: not a teacher

NancyJK: I hope you guys had a great day like we had up here.

PatriciaCh: You are looking for a web job right?

EmilyW: yes and no

PatriciaCh: I hate to break it to you...I am back to school...

KathieK: Already?

NancyJK: Kristen said you were the other day. Sorry, today up here was the perfect day.

KathieK: My busy season typically begins mid-August but started a week ago...

NancyJK: Must be Florida didn't have to worry about the farmers and their schedules

KathieK -)

PatriciaCh: yes....I am on the staff to open a new school....and it is not pretty.....no textbooks..etc...

KristenK: oh no!

NancyJK: Is the school open?

KathieK: Sheryl, when do schools in KS start back?

SherylM: We start on the 17th.

SherylM: Others start closer to Labor Day

PatriciaCh: we finally got a CO on Friday....we moved in our materials on Sat and Sun...kids are coming tomorrow

KathieK: Here in CT it is usually just before or the day after Labor Day, and run until June 20 or so.

KathieK: I work at a college, which starts on August 28 and goes until May. But I work year-round

PatriciaCh: they are still hooking up our computers and AV equipment...at least the bathrooms work

NancyJK: My city starts after labor day as the Union for teachers has a clause about when the first paycheck comes.

KathieK: !!!

NancyJK: Do you have desks and chairs?

SherylM: If the bathrooms work, and there is food, you are set! HAHA

PatriciaCh: we have a state law...starting next year...districts cannot start any earlier than late Aug....not enough....our class sizes are huge...we have a state law on 24 kids per class...I am up to 36 in one

PatriciaCh: Sheryl...you are right....when the new high school was open....the bathrooms did not work....

KathieK: Sheryl, I think Kristen can attest to the power of the FIRST programs and its effect on students, as a former student participant and now a mentor of a team...

SherylM: I started one school year with no books, it was a nightmare. I didn't have a problem with it, but the students and parents wanted a book. Even though a book is only a resource.

PatriciaCh: I agree.....but if you are a new teacher.....you are stuck....so I am mentoring these two colleagues....they really wanted a book....

PatriciaCh: Actually I am going to use LEGO bricks in a project.....

KathieK -) thanks.

SherylM: Robotics is a fantastic technology. When I taught in Wichita, we used them. The problem is access.

PatriciaCh: I have to think about it too.

KathieK: In what way Sheryl?

SherylM: Shared resources involve timing and training that weren't always effective.

KathieK: oh...

BjB: what about projecting web resources?

SherylM: I just looked at the LEGO NXT, it is really quite nice. I noticed that they are Bluetooth enabled.

SherylM: We were just starting to use our web resources more effectively when I moved.

PatriciaCh: yes.....if you were to start a LEGO team....that is the set to get....they will phased out the older version

SherylM: I had just helped my school become the only NASA school in Kansas then I had to leave.

PatriciaCh: what a shame!....What is a NASA school?

KathieK: Oh that reminds me, I have the address for the teacher astronaut for you, Pat.

KristenK: Pat, is Tiff home yet?

KristenK: have the colleges out there started too>

SherylM: the NASA Explorer school program

PatriciaCh: no....Tiff is coming home this weekend

PatriciaCh: Sheryl; what does it entail?

KristenK: exciting!

PatriciaCh: yes...Tiff usually decorates my classroom....and I am not doing a great job

KristenK: LOL

PatriciaCh: yes....she has the talent...and I don't :{

SherylM: The website is

SherylM: <http://explorerschools.nasa.gov/portal/site/nes/>

SherylM: It is a grant program where schools, teachers, and NASA work to improve science ed

KristenK: that is pretty cool!

NancyJK: Is this open to any school?

KathieK: My sister developed the Challenger Space Center curriculums when it started (she was one of the first 7 Fellows) and ran a Sky School in her elem school for years.

KathieK: She combined it with her teaching subject - art - and I can recall seeing lots of space capsules, etc. over the years!

SherylM: I bet she really enjoyed that. I have used a lot of great NASA curriculum materials

KathieK: Yes, she did. But she's now enjoying her retirement on Cape Cod a lot, too!

KathieK: Pat, the address to write to the astronauts is Astronaut Appearances Office

KathieK: Mail Code CB

KathieK: NASA Johnson Space Center

KathieK: 2101 NASA Parkway

KathieK: Houston, TX 77058-3696

PatriciaCh: Thanks...it sounds interesting....I have to approach my principal

KathieK: but I can write to her on your behalf should you choose to, since my sister is a friend.

SherylM: the explorer program is available to any school. It is "Targeting underserved populations in diverse geographic locations". The competition is due in the spring.

NancyJK: What grade level is the program for?

SherylM: We had an astronaut and some other NASA folks come to announce our award

SherylM: It is intended for grades 4-9

MelissaSt joined the room.

PatriciaCh: hi Melissa

NancyJK: Okay, I figured it sounded too good to be true!

PatriciaCh: it doesn't hurt to try

SherylM: They really like colleges and other groups to help the Explorer school grant plans

KathieK: I will be taking a conference call in a few minutes from my Regional Director... Sheryl, if you would like more info please e-mail me at KathieK@firstnemo.org - and check out our website for NEMO (Non-Engineering Mentor Organization) at www.firstnemo.org

NancyJK: Well, we are grades 9-12; what is the program of the grant?

PatriciaCh: Kathie...I will get back to you

KathieK: OK, good night everyone, stay cool!

SherylM: Thanks, I enjoyed the visit.

KathieK left the room (signed off).

NancyJK: What are the objectives of the explorer school grants?

PatriciaCh: the grade level is 4-9

SherylM: Nancy, the website lays it out much better than I can. I can tell you that it was one of the less stressful grants that we ever applied for because we hit several of their qualifiers.

NancyJK: does that mean you have to be teaching in the middle school area?

NancyJK: Okay, I will check it out when we are done here.

SherylM: Our school was a 6-8 middle school

NancyJK: Thank you for the info.

PatriciaCh: it says 4 - 9.....so it is up to high school freshman

SherylM: Yes, or upper elem

NancyJK: We do have grade 9 so I will check it out.

NancyJK: Pat, were we expecting students at this chat tonight?

PatriciaCh: the new school is in a more diverse area....

SherylM: Good Idea. we enjoyed applying and planning a program

PatriciaCh: not really.....Melissa...how are you doing?

NancyJK: Are we having chats for the high school age girls only?

NancyJK: I know we are having chats for the "older" girls (like me!)

PatriciaCh: I haven't been able to establish that as of yet....but they will in the South Florida room

MelissaSt: I'm good and you?

SherylM: Thanks for letting me visit! I will share info about your group. Have a great school year!

PatriciaCh: thanks....we usually chat twice a month...so drop in

KristenK: alright, I am going to get back to organizing!

KristenK: I will talk to you soon!

PatriciaCh: good luck in school

KristenK: thanks, good luck with your new school Pat!

PatriciaCh /think

PatriciaCh: I lost my cheat sheet...on the waves, etc

BjB: start the line with /th

BjB . o O (for thinking)

BjB: and start the line with a colon to emote (waves, etc.)

PatriciaCh . o O (thinking)

PatriciaCh smiles

NancyJK: Well, I think we have to rethink the chats; I get stuff out of them; but Kristen wasn't sure why she was here.

PatriciaCh smiles

PatriciaCh: I am back.....I would like to target these chats for the teachers etc.....

NancyJK: I am about to sign off and get some more work done in the home; big group expected this weekend, including in-laws.

PatriciaCh: and set up the South Florida room for the girls

PatriciaCh: may be we can set up the second chat for the girls

NancyJK: Okay, I thought the Yahoo, notices for were this chat

PatriciaCh: yes....but we have to rethink how to contact the adults...and girls

NancyJK: No that sounds like I am confused. I am not, really.

PatriciaCh: because Kristen and Melissa can be chatting with each other instead of us

NancyJK: When Marie gets back, perhaps we can "chat" and make some decisions.

PatriciaCh: yes...

NancyJK: Is there an age group for the South Florida room?

NancyJK: I know I haven't shown a lot of enthusiasm and willingness to work on the RCU, but I do think it is moving on slow power.

PatriciaCh: no....the set up is different....anyone can join this group.....invitation has to go out for the South Florida room....Sheryl couldn't log into that room

PatriciaCh: it is on slow power.....that was what Marie was referring to

PatriciaCh: but it is still summer...even though I am back in school....it is time to think and try to jump start things...

NancyJK: Well, my daughter thinks this isn't girl friendly and but she hasn't given me any suggestions either.

PatriciaCh: well....that is why I would like the girls to go to the other room.....no adults....except for one to monitor ...a lurker so to speak

NancyJK: I have not gone to the Florida chat so I don't know that one at all.

NancyJK: Oh, but then there must be an age limit??? or top? like 21?

PatriciaCh: you have privilege for that room as well...

NancyJK: I'm sorry, I am sure this isn't interesting to Melissa. I am going to sign out for tonight.

PatriciaCh: no....it's a secure site for students....

PatriciaCh: good night Nancy.....we will talk and work it out

NancyJK: Good night Pat and Melissa and BJB

NancyJK: Talk to you in a couple of weeks.

PatriciaCh: enjoy your guests

BjB waves goodnight to Nancy

MelissaSt: good night

NancyJK left the room (signed off).

BjB: I'm going to go to SAC Reception and add the dates for your Robotics discussions

MelissaSt: I think I will call it a night as well. Summer assignments to do. good night

MelissaSt left the room (signed off).

BjB: two more resource rooms were just added this week and I'm hoping this will increase participation in your discussions

BjB left the room.