

Title of Session: FIRST Robotics
Moderator: Patricia Chen
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Room: Robotics Group (K-12)

BjB: Hi, Pat!

PatriciaCh: hi BJ

PatriciaCh: How are you?

BjB: fine, thanks.

BjB: . o O (too much multitasking, as usual!)

PatriciaCh: It will be a slow night.....

PatriciaCh: yes...there is a report on multitasking...overrated...

BjB: grins...certainly gives one the attention span of a gnat

PatriciaCh: yes.....but that is natural to my students....

BjB: nods solemnly...that's what many teachers don't understand

BjB: it's a different generation

PatriciaCh: yes it is.....we are teaching to a privileged group.....some of them do not realize effort is on their part...not parents or the teachers

BjB: agrees

RobertMck: joined the room.

MichelleLM: joined the room.

PatriciaCh: Hello!

BjB: HI, Robert and Michelle. Welcome!

MichelleLM: whew! took a lot to figure out how to get here...

RobertMck: hey guys

PatriciaCh: so how are you both involved with robotics?

BjB . o O (or are you here to listen to the wonders of FIRST Robotics?)

RobertMck: not sure what the FIRST program is actually

MichelleLM: Not really. Just interested in seeing what I may do with it. I have done lego mindstorms with my Algebra classes in the past.

PatriciaCh: The FIRST program runs from elementary to high school....if you go to www.usfirst.org you can see the different levels of programs

PatriciaCh: Michelle...what do you do with your algebra kids

MichelleLM: Haven't for a few years but we would build and race. I see that there is a First Lego League. Sounds like fun.

PatriciaCh: Yes...what grade level do you teach

MichelleLM: 7th/8th.

PatriciaCh: okay....then you will do LEGO....this year's game is about nanotechnology.

PatriciaCh: I teach 7th grade

PatriciaCh: math that is

PatriciaCh: Robert ...are you a teacher?

MichelleLM: I am already twitching with excitement.

PatriciaCh: it is not too late to sign up.....but the deadline is looming...

PatriciaCh: I sponsor the club at my school,,,,,

MichelleLM: I'll look at the details later this evening over a cup of tea

RobertMck: Yes, I teach Physics and some Maths in Ireland up to sixth form, that's 18 yrs old. Am looking at the FIRST site ...interesting

MichelleLM: Is it expensive?

PatriciaCh: The most you can have on the team is 10 kids

PatriciaCh: LEGO is not as expensive as FIRST robotics.....that is what the high schoolers will do.....130 lbs of metal and LEXAN

PatriciaCh: because of the cost involved...some high schools are going toward VEX...this is a new program...I think it is 3 years old

MichelleLM: I'll be asking at our high school if they are involved in robotics. Our new hs might be.

PatriciaCh: where are you located?

PatriciaCh: I can check on the FIRST site

MichelleLM: Northern San Diego County

MichelleLM: Mission Hills High School in San Marcos

PatriciaCh: what is the name of the hs

MichelleLM: Mission Hills High School and/or San Marcos High School in San Marcos, CA

PatriciaCh: ok...I am checking now

PatriciaCh: I don't see your school listed....if you go into the main website...click on the FIRST Robotics tab....on the lower right ...click on the map of USA...the CA....scroll down...you can click on the teams from California and see what teams are near you

PatriciaCh: Robert ...which one interested you...VEX or FRC?

RobertMck: just looking at the information now

PatriciaCh: okay....ask away if you have any questions

RobertMck: thanks

PatriciaCh: same for you Michelle....I worked on LEGO and FRC ...VEX is new to me

MichelleLM: Oh, I'm back- Lots of LA teams.

PatriciaCh: yes....California also host several tournaments....at least on the FRC level

MichelleLM: Do you run your program after school as a club? or as part of the school day?

PatriciaCh: I run my program as a club.....some schools run it as a class.....like a technology class ...so those schools have the advantage over clubs like my school....we can only meet 1 hour...some of my kids have to take the bus home

MichelleLM: Are they technology classes at the high school level or middle school level?

PatriciaCh: we have a technology class.....it is a generic term....it is up to the teacher as to what he or she does....in my old school...they did PowerPoint projects and such...in my current school...he does more hands on stuff

PatriciaCh: I teach in a middle school

MichelleLM: Tell me please about the logistics of actually starting out

PatriciaCh: Do you still have your old LEGO Mindstorms?

MichelleLM: I have 10 sets

PatriciaCh: ok....

PatriciaCh: Right now...all you have to do is to register online to get a team number

PatriciaCh: you can have up to 10 kids on the team

PatriciaCh: but that is a lot of kids...try not to have more than 6 kids.....that is my experience

MichelleLM: Is it because of chaos? or needy?

PatriciaCh: both....

PatriciaCh: some middle schoolers....some are independent workers....and some have not learned what collaboration means...listening skills are not always there

MichelleLM: Could I pull off an all girl team?

PatriciaCh: that will be wonderful

PatriciaCh: so if you have 2 teams...you must register for 2 numbers... then you register for a tournament in your area

MichelleLM: Got it

PatriciaCh: my school email is chenp@martin.k12.fl.us

PatriciaCh: the new sets that are outNXT.....but you can still use the RCX bricks..you do not have to switch until 2009

MichelleLM: Are they that different?

MichelleLM: Did you write a grant for funding?

PatriciaCh: yes....I was transferred to my current school....we have nothing...so I talked my principal into buy a new set....the programming is different and how you download the program is different too

MichelleLM: I bought my sets via ebay, garage sales, and my son worked at Legoland. I would like to "grant" a new set

PatriciaCh: no I did not write a grant....I think it is \$150 to register one team

MichelleLM: We have title monies that we should be able to use.

PatriciaCh: my school is a newly built school....so we are funded...by taxpayers dollars....I was able to ask for a new set

PatriciaCh: and our local FRC team...which I am affiliated with...will reimburse me for my second set

MichelleLM: How nice. Starting a new school is so nice. I wish that I had thought of this when we started our school and we were told to buy whatever we thought math needed.

PatriciaCh: next year...the principal will not be as generous....in the first year....we were told to ask for the "moon"

PatriciaCh: same here.....I went hog wild with the purchasing

PatriciaCh: also...I forgot....

PatriciaCh: if you are registering for a team....make sure you also get the field kit...this is very important

MichelleLM: okay.

MichelleLM: Do you use legos or the like in your math classes?

PatriciaCh: without the field kit....you cannot know how to play the missions

PatriciaCh: no....I don't use LEGOs in my classes at all....

PatriciaCh: I do show the FRC videos....and the parts that were machined wrong....how you should measure carefully

PatriciaCh: how many students do you have in your classes

MichelleLM: that would be entertaining!

MichelleLM: I have 22 to 38 students in my classes. I like to use k'nex and/or Legos in my support math classes

PatriciaCh: the kids are pumped when they watch the video...between the music and the robots going at each other...

PatriciaCh: how many kids do you have in your support classes?

MichelleLM: They also get to see that ± 0.01 really does make a difference in machining

MichelleLM sorry about the spelling

MichelleLM: 20-25 students in support classes

PatriciaCh: yes....all parts have to fit...there is no room for error

PatriciaCh: the kids get a kick out of the fact that I can do some light machining

MichelleLM: Working in groups and reading diagrams challenges them. We did the ToysRUs K'nex building of the roller coaster last year. They loved it.

PatriciaCh: how do you do it?

PatriciaCh: are you a teacher?

MichelleLM: I have 5 groups around the room. Each group builds a part of the coaster or the last case the Ball Popper. Then we put it all together. It was displayed at the local store.

PatriciaCh: okay.....I am trying to find ways to inspire these kids.....some of them sit there and give me the you are wasting my time....especially 2 girls.....their major interest....is to socialize only

MichelleLM: For Legos, I use the AIMS programs and have the needed parts in a large pencil box for organization. Each group of 3 students has a box.

PatriciaCh: what is the AIMS program?

MichelleLM: They are MS. That is their job to socialize! They humor us with pretending to LOVE us.

PatriciaCh: yes....we use to say the MRS path...

MichelleLM: AIMS Education Foundation. They have tons of ideas. POBox 8129 Fresno, CA 93747-8120 for a catalogue

PatriciaCh: do they have a website?

MichelleLM: I have used with Legos- Machine shop, Brick layers, and the physics one-went blank.

MichelleLM: Found it-www.AIMSedu.org/

PatriciaCh: my kids need more hands-on and meanwhile ...I have to teach them how to take our state test...and make the gains needed.

PatriciaCh: thanks...I will check into it

MichelleLM: I Hear you! I have found that the hands on actually saves me time in the re-teaching area.

MichelleLM: State Test has been our battle cry in our district for the last 5 years. We keep tightening the standards. My students actually were on the high end of our department this last year. So I am hoping to continue this trend for next year.

PatriciaCh: a big problem is these kids cannot read well ... or I have kids that do not speak English and I am trying to get through to them...which open up the time for the socialites to entertain the class.

MichelleLM: We have 45% second language learners. I am hoping to pull from this group for the First Lego

MichelleLM: They are very social! As they tell me it is part of them. (They think they are being cute.)

PatriciaCh: my low end kids did well last year...so here I am ...in the new school...trying to bring out the best ...

MichelleLM: It feels so good to watch the "lower end" students grow. It really is a matter of language

PatriciaCh: my two are deliberate....they are trying to tag team...in my class and another teacher....one girl transferred into my class...there is no other teacher she can transfer to....

MichelleLM: No flipping of schedules?

PatriciaCh: it makes me angry when they are trying to disrupt other students learning....with the one girl...we have conferenced with the mom....status quo

MichelleLM: It is always a shame when they "get" away with this.

PatriciaCh: no....I have only one Intensive class....she came out of the other teacher's class to mine...and I am stuck with her....

MichelleLM: what is Intensive?

PatriciaCh: Intensive is a course label....in Florida...the scores is on a scale of 1 - 5...level 1's are labeled as Intensive...level 3 is considered passing..

MichelleLM: in language?

MichelleLM: or state testing skills?

PatriciaCh: state testing....for most subject areas ...passing is a level 3...writing is either a 3.5 or 4.0

PatriciaCh: we test in reading math writing and science...we should be adding social studies ...I think next year

MichelleLM: So this class is lower skilled and not necessarily second language learners

MichelleLM: I have 3 of these type of classes. Which are the math support classes.

PatriciaCh: yes....in our districtwe really do not have a program for ESOL kids....they just dumped them in intensive

MichelleLM: WOW that is really an injustice to those children

PatriciaCh: the kids are pulled out of LA ...to get extra help...

PatriciaCh: yes it is an injustice...just because of the language...it doesn't mean that they cannot do it

MichelleLM: We have 3 levels of second language classes at our site. Then we have a pull out for low testing scores which students give up their expo. They must be in the Language arts of Math support class.

PatriciaCh: luckily...I can speak Spanglish...at least the math version....I know the numbers...and operations ...so I can say certain things to the kids to help them

MichelleLM: Students are really learning 3 languages, English, Spanish, and Math

PatriciaCh: so when kids like the socialites act out....I really am not happy....and there is only so much that the administrators can do

MichelleLM: They are lucky to have someone who can help in Spanish

MichelleLM: It is tiring at the end of the period to have "battled" because you care about your students.

MichelleLM: May I email you later after I look to see if I can pull off the First Lego project? I really enjoy exchanging notes with you.

PatriciaCh: yes...these kids are learning...my last year's on grade level class ...the kids were the best....I took the chance and pulled 4 ESOL kids out of the Intensive and put them in there....the kids would stay quiet and let me try to tell the kids what to do in Spanish...and the English speakers even learn a few words

MichelleLM: Sounds like a win-win situation

PatriciaCh: yes.... I would love to help you out...thanks for listening...today was one of the tiring days...I have these kids at the end of the day...

PatriciaCh: and a new girl who only has been in the USA for a year

PatriciaCh: poor girl heard me yell at the socialites

MichelleLM: I totally understand about days like today. You know, she probably was applauding you, silently, because she wants to learn without disruptions.

PatriciaCh: I apologized to her ...when I gave her the textbook.....

PatriciaCh: that is another sentence I can say

MichelleLM: You know, I have found that these students are so loving and forgiving.

PatriciaCh: yes....they want to learn...and they want someone who understands how hard it is to be an ESOL kid...indirectly I was one....I may have been born in NYC....but I never had to speak English until I went to school

MichelleLM: How does that happen?

MichelleLM: What was your first year like?

PatriciaCh: I lived in Chinatown....we only spoke Chinese...you go to school ...read about Dick and Jane...talk to your friends and family in Chinese....just like the Latinos are doing....today

MichelleLM: Got it.

PatriciaCh: It was not until my parents moved us out.....then it was...gotta learn the language

MichelleLM: Was it difficult?

PatriciaCh: no....I was quiet....just did a lot of absorbing....I had the background...so it was not a major problem....also I had teachers who helped

MichelleLM: It still must have been a little scary...

PatriciaCh: so by junior high school...I was fine

PatriciaCh: yes....thrown into the world of "gringos" as the kids will say today

PatriciaCh: I am a survivor....so I did not think a lot about it....

MichelleLM: Pat-I must go to my yoga class-it's my stress release...I have enjoyed chatting. I will let you know how I am holding up with the First lego. Thank you for all of your help and insights. Take Care

PatriciaCh: I think that is why I accepted the transfer to this new school.....I knew that there will be a lot of kids who need help...also my 4 kids were transferred as well

PatriciaCh: okay...stay in touch and let me know how to help you

MichelleLM: I definitely will.

PatriciaCh: okay....happy trails!

MichelleLM left the room (signed off).

BJB: well, that was a pleasant experience

PatriciaCh: yes...it was...and I thought it will be a slow night

PatriciaCh: I hope Michelle can pull off the team...all girls will be terrific

BJB smiles. Yes, I know how you've been working on getting more girls interested

PatriciaCh: yes....it is hard to do it on a virtual world.....I am not sure if everyone is ready for it or accepts in....I mean an organization that is meaningful...not something like My Space

BJB nods

BJB: there are a few who are beyond places like Tapped In, but the majority are just catching on to the power of the interface

BJB . o O (or are behind the learning curve)

BJB: what you're doing is wonderful!

PatriciaCh: yes....even the educators....not everyone is comfortable with the virtual...

BJB agrees...I was actually referring to educators

PatriciaCh: ok...

BJB: what about a virtual tour of the features of Tapped In for some of your kids or some of your leaders, Pat?

PatriciaCh: I also am involved with Future City....this is my first year....it is about engineering and team work...but not with LEGOs....some middle schoolers think it is too babyish

PatriciaCh: our district has a problem about kids and the Internet....but I am trying to interest some of my friends into getting on to Tapped....there is so much out there...especially the ones who are trying to get their National Boards...I saw that there is a group that meets

BJB nods. An NBC support group

PatriciaCh: I have mentioned about Tapped to several administrators.....but no takers

BJB: if you want to set up a tour, just let me know and we can work out something. ...

PatriciaCh: okay ..I will ...I know that I still owe you a perspective ...anyway essay about using Tapped

PatriciaCh: I was introduced to it...during my Masters....in fact I have to email himthis is a great place to meet and exchange ideas....tonight was perfect....both Michelle and I ...at least I think that....we got a lot

PatriciaCh: one of my teachers in the program....got us involved in online discussions ...on Tapped In....no other instructors did ...even though the program was about using technology

BJB: cool. You were lucky!

PatriciaCh: yes....I was.....he was terrific....I liked him a lot.....

BJB wonders if he still brings classes online?

PatriciaCh: I should let him know about all the great stuff that I have in my school....and how I am loving it

BJB smiles...teachers always hear the bad stuff...always nice to hear the good

PatriciaCh: his name is Jim Lehman {sp?} I hope so....if

PatriciaCh: yes....I tried to stay in touch with him...he lives in Oregon

BJB: he's still a member.... JimLe

PatriciaCh: he really works with you to get you through the thesis

BJB: you can contact him directly through the tapped in interface

PatriciaCh: I know that he is working on his doctorate

BJB: he hasn't been logged in since April

PatriciaCh: ah! He must be finishing up his paper....

PatriciaCh: I invited him for this...but no response...

BJB: try again. You know how hectic schedules can be

PatriciaCh: I will....I should go...finish some work and then off to bed...I try to get to work around 7 so I can get some stuff done early..

PatriciaCh: I got it

PatriciaCh: thanks

BJB hugs goodnight.

BJB: take care.

PatriciaCh: good night...talk to you in 2 weeks.