

9/2/16

Hi New Students and Parents

Welcome to Robotics for 2016. There is a fair bit to get through here but hopefully this should answer the majority of questions.

It is a hectic part of the season with the build up to Nationals. This occurs at the Vodaphone Events Centre in Manakau straight after camp week Friday 26 Feb - Sunday 28 Feb. As a result we start new students on the Tuesday after camp week. After Nationals is over the focus is preparing teams to go to the World Championships in Louisville Kentucky (should any qualify) and regrouping for the next season. The next season starts with the release of the new games at the conclusion of the World Champs in the Term 1 holidays. After this, the whole process starts again as students design and build robots to play the new games. The VEX competition is the biggest and fastest growing robotics competition in the world with well over 13,000 teams worldwide in 30+ countries.

It is well worth new students and parents trying to get out to Nationals at some stage to have a look around at the event as this will give the best indication of what its all about. Saturday or Sunday mid morning onward would be best. Entry is free. Please feel free to introduce yourself to me and the Kristin Team.

New students start after camp week as follows:

1. Tuesdays through to Fridays 3:30pm - 5pm in the Technology workshops and Atrium
2. Students can attend any sessions they wish although two sessions or more is recommended per week for the most benefit
3. When the new games are released in Term 2 students will also need to attend some of the all day competitions held on Saturdays. Without this they will not understand the game play, the developing tactics and the constantly evolving robot designs. At least 1 competition per term is recommended.
4. Students will initially be learning basic programming and building techniques until the beginning of T2 when they start their robot designs for the new games and put what they have learned into practice.
5. There is no formal instruction - just collaborative learning. Students proceed at the own pace starting with a basic tutorial according to how much time, effort and enthusiasm they bring. They learn collaboratively from each other and globally on the VEX forums where they can read threads, post questions and network with students from NZ and around the globe.
6. There are 5 training robots and students organise themselves into teams (approx 4-5 per team). I will only intervene if I have to.
7. Subscriptions are \$200 for the year and can be paid late in T1 if you wish or straight away. Students who decide its not for them in T1 will receive a full refund.
8. A PE T shirt is fine for uniform at competitions and dress is fairly casual. Normal school uniform for after school sessions.

A critical part of the process is the ability of the the team to organise themselves.

Designing, building, competing and developing a competitive robot over the course of a season is a full on long term project that is not made easier by the fact that different team members attend different sessions. If they are not organised and on the same page they will often work at cross purposes. I will suggest that they set up an email group or social media group for their team, have robot build diaries and liase with each other during the week to make things happen. Parents can help with this behind the scenes by reinforcing these organisational strategies. I keep an eye on emerging leadership qualities and team captains are appointed at some stage.

K Force is largely self-funding. If you are able to help in any way with any sponsorship it would be most welcome. We always have new initiatives on the go to improve things as it grows such the 5 new VEX IQ training robots and programing laptops the new students will be starting on this year. Likewise if you are interested in helping directly either with mentoring or some supervision please don't hesitate to let me know - no experience required - just enthusiasm.

Please feel free to visit the team website which has all the information including this introduction, some promotional videos, the student handbook and the permission slip. <http://kforce.org.nz/join/>

There is also an events calendar. The website is all student work including the coding and is not made from a template. This is an example of the many other areas students can get involved in as well as robots. There are numerous worldwide design challenges associated with VEX robotics such as 3D animation, web design and CAD.

I hope this answers all your questions

Best Regards

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