

Belonging

the newsletter from the *FIRST* NC ED&I Team – February 2024

Equity – Treating everyone fairly, having equal opportunities and removing barriers.

Diversity – The way we are all different.

Inclusion – Creating space for everyone where differences are embraced.

Don't let build season stress you out too much!

It's that time of build season - the optimistic, beautiful dream of the best robot ever is slowly turning into the reality of prototyping, building, and learning as fast as possible while still balancing all the rest of life's challenges.

The mentors can see the deadlines looming and are trying hard not to push too much, if at all, depending on your team's dynamics. Some of the more experienced students are starting to see those deadlines coming, too. Seniors are determined to have their best ever, last year, or maybe are torn between robots and the other senior activities. The newer students on the team are still in the optimistic phase, doing some hanging out, enjoying the student time together, learning some new things. Over the next few weeks, that shifts, with more and more people seeing the approaching deadlines and tension showing up in different places on the team.

Try some team-wide activities to destress:

1. Do a fun team-builder to lighten the mood. The best team-builders this time of the year focus on thinking outside the box, working on a fun challenge together, not creating too much inter-team competitiveness, and making sure no one feels vulnerable.

* Build challenge: Do a quick LEGO build challenge with groups of 3 to 4 (include the mentors!). Build a defense against aliens, create a LEGO lunch with your group's favorite foods, build a fantasy/sci fi scene, build a scene from the group's favorite movie.

* Timing challenge: Give each team of 3 or 4 some random supplies and see if they can build a structure that lets a ball move to hit a line 10 feet away in exactly 1 minute, or 30 seconds, or 5 seconds (choose 1) - celebrate the uniqueness of solutions rather than the winning model.

* Perspectives: In small groups, create a description describing your FRC team to different audiences - what would you do to tell your grandmother about your team, a 5-year-old, a circus performer, someone who doesn't speak your language.

2. Take a few minutes to de-stress with some youtube humor

Watch a couple Tom and Jerry cartoons or a Curious George episode. Talk about the build season in terms of Curious George building a bridge (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjoiy6LYHKY>) Or do a quick poll of the team to figure out some favorites that work for your team culture.

3. Take an ice cream bar break - ask parents to bring in ice cream and favorite toppings and let the team just chill a bit.

4. Don't do too much social media as a group. There are always teams ahead of your team and behind your team. And remember, you don't know the whole story - usually only the best gets posted on social media.

5. Have a gratitude session. On a white board have students and mentors write down all the things they're grateful for - with FRC, the team, other teams, school, each other, friends, and family.

6. Talk through the timeline and expectations

Some teams use Trello or a spreadsheet or several other methods. This year PyroTech (3459) tried a long whiteboard wall timeline (made out of hardboard/shower board from Lowes:

<https://www.lowes.com/pd/47-75-in-x-7-98-ft-Smooth-White-Wall-Panel/3015239>). It's been a great way for everyone to get a glance at what's going on - helpful visually and kinesthetically.

7. Watch out for each other - for students and mentors who might need some extra help or understanding.

The intense FRC season is a chance to learn a lot of life skills. But let's all keep in mind that this is a game. And we're in it for the long haul - for experiences that will stay with us the rest of our lives.

Do **you** have tips for other teams on how to include people and help them feel they belong?

Send them to FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com or use this [GOOGLE FORM](#) and we'll include them in upcoming newsletters.



From *FIRST*: Just in case you missed it! – 2024 Safety Animation Award Winner and Finalists

FIRST® Robotics Competition is more than robots. In addition to celebrating the machines our teams build and the outreach they do in our community, we have two awards that celebrate outstanding artistic and technical achievement in animation. Today, I'm excited to announce the winner and finalist of the Safety Animation Award sponsored by UL Solutions. I love the different messages and animation styles employed on these videos. The winner and finalist videos will be shown at all events this year as part of the playoff tournament!

FIRST Robotics Competition is delighted to announce the winner and finalists for the 2024 Safety Animation Award sponsored by UL Solutions!

Congratulations to the following teams:

[Winner: Team 8, Paly Robotics from Palo Alto, California, USA](#)

[Finalist: Team 1086, Blue Cheese from Glen Allen, Virginia, USA](#)

[Finalist: Team 1986, Team Titanium from Lee's Summit, Missouri, USA](#)

February Holidays and Events:

February is Black History Month in the United States and Canada. Carter G. Woodson started the tradition with the creation of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. In 1926, Negro History Week was established. Since 1976, the month has been federally designated to remember the contributions of people of the African diaspora.

February 1: National Freedom Day, honoring the signing by Abraham Lincoln of a resolution that later became the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that abolished slavery.

February 1 to 2: Imbolc, a Gaelic, Pagan, and Wiccan traditional festival that represents making way for spring and the rebirth of nature.

February 1 to 7: World Interfaith Harmony Week, designated by the United Nations, focused on peace within and among all nations and peoples.

February 7: Lailat al Miraj, a Muslim holiday commemorating Muhammad's journey from Mecca to Jerusalem.

February 10: Lunar New Year, marks the beginning of the lunar calendar in many East Asian cultures.

February 11: International Day of Women and Girls in Science, designated by the United Nations; working toward gender equality in STEM.

February 13: Mardi Gras, the last day for Catholics to indulge before Ash Wednesday starts the weeks of fasting that accompany Lent

February 14: Ash Wednesday, is the first day of Lent on the Christian calendar.

February 14: Vasant Panchami, is the Hindu festival that highlights the coming of spring.

February 14: St. Valentine's Day, is a Western Christian feast day honoring one or two early saints named Valentinus.

February 15: Parinirvana Day, is the commemoration of Buddha's death at the age of 80.

February 19: Presidents Day, honors the birthdays of George Washington, and every US president.

February 20: World Day of Social Justice, promotes global awareness and action for social justice.

February 21: International Mother Language Day, designated by the United Nations; promotes linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism based on mother tongue / first language

February 26 to 29: Intercalary Days, or Ayyám-i-Há, is celebrated by people of the Bahá'í faith.

February 28: Rare Disease Day, raises awareness for people affected by rare diseases

Inspiration & Recognition Spotlight: #PeopleofSTEAM: Meet Kelli



As an alum of all three FIRST® programs, a current mentor for a FIRST® Robotics Competition team and President of the FIRST Illinois Robotics Alum Association, Kelli is no stranger to FIRST or STEAM and the impact it can have on your life. Currently, she is an LED Video Engineer and Content Systems Manager at Unanimous Designs, or as Kelli puts it, "I make millions of lights blink in unison for some of the country's coolest clients." Some of those clients have included Lady Gaga, the NBA, and The Walt Disney Company. She works with TV and film crews to make sure that their designs are optimized for LED formats. Although she will put in 140-hour work weeks during large events, she loves hearing the cheers as the lights go out and a show she created is starting.

It's almost like when your FIRST team arrives at a competition, you have your first match of the season, and you get to see all of your hard work pay off.

Read more here - [#PeopleofSTEAM: Meet Kelli](#)

Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Training: *Kids Included Together (KIT)*

This webinar focuses on providing coaches and mentors with a better understanding of some of the challenges youth with disabilities face, and how to create a more welcoming and comfortable environment for everyone on their *FIRST* teams.

Click here to view: [Inclusive Recruitment and Enrollment Strategies webinar](#)

The *FIRST* NC ED&I Team: Contact us at: FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com

We are a team of coaches/mentors who want to help create a community and culture of people who embrace the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion, who want to develop themselves, and who understand that growth and diversity of all types lead to team excellence.

Anisha Patel - The Pitt Pirates 2642

Dave Lashley (he/him) - Team SPORK 3196

Linda Whipker (she/her) - Team PyroTech 3459

Melissa "Bee" Bube (they/she) - Girls on Fire 5679

All Editions are Available Online at: <https://www.firstnorthcarolina.org/belonging-newsletter>