Oftentimes, lessons and blessings come in unexpected packages. Nowhere has this been truer than VEX Robotics.

Robotics looks a lot like what it sounds like—building, designing, and programming a robot. That’s what we came to do, and that is indeed what we did.

But in the end, it’s not just about robotics. It goes beyond arms, claws, and rollers. It transcends aluminum and steel and plastic parts.

It’s about frantic Friday afternoons before tournaments, watching the sun set through the window while scrambling to finish a robot, to ensure the past month’s work comes to fruition.

It’s about boarding the bus to the competition, carefully loading our robot into the luggage compartment, shivering and seeing our breath in the cold, early morning air.

It’s about the tension and stress as our entire team attempts to figure out why the robot isn’t working, glancing nervously at the clock, wondering if we’ll miss our round. And it’s also about the whole team cheering, as the robot comes back to life with a jerk, thirty seconds before our match is scheduled to start, leaving us just enough time to sprint to the playing field.

But most of all, it’s about the life lessons, on time management, on problem solving and conflict resolution. It’s learning how to delegate tasks, and how to create a finished product by a deadline. And finally, it’s about teamwork, working together, and doing as a group what we cannot do alone.

That’s what VEX Robotics means to me.

-Jonathan Qu, Team 10Z