VEX Essay challenge

By: Spencer Short

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As a member of the VEX robotics program at East Lake High School, we try our best to build robots and enter them in competitions. We set goals and strive to accomplish them to the best of our ability. In my time with VEX I have learned many valuable lessons and I have learned many new skills. I feel VEX will benefit every participant throughout their entire future as it has given me several benefits in my short time with the program. As a first year VEX participant at East Lake I hope to remain with the team in the coming years and go to even more competitions than the one I’ve gone to so far. By doing this I can absorb even more information that will benefit me in the real world.

During my months in VEX, I’ve acquired a sufficient knowledge of what we do. At the start of the year we first started by reviewing the rules of the VEX competition in a round-table discussion; the idea is that the more we know about the rules, the more we can help other teams as well as our own. After the rules seminar, we began to design our robots in Autodesk Inventor, which I am also learning in my Introduction to Engineering Design class at school. Our design was then reviewed by the rest of the team, coach and teammates included, and voted on for approval. We then constructed our robot by dividing the robot subsystems into groups. After we had constructed our robot, we programmed it using Robot C, and shortly thereafter we started driver and autonomous testing. This all helped us plan for our first tournament, and we felt confident that we were prepared to compete despite our lack of experience. In addition, I feel like going through this preparation helped me develop teamwork skills necessary for my future.

In our VEX team we have a process that we follow at each team meeting. We first set goals for each building day. We record the goals for the day in our engineering notebook. We set out to accomplish the goals to the best of our ability. At the end of the meeting we record our results in the engineering notebook. Although some goals do not get reached, we are always proud of our effort. We have discovered that the best way to meet our goals is to work together as an entire team. Doing this has given me an important skill for my future- setting specific goals and trying my best to meet them.

Not only does our robot group work together but our entire school team works together. In addition to the help we get from our teammates working on robot 79A, we have people who work in our F.I.R.S.T. Robotics group help us out with issues. We are not only members of our VEX group, we are members of Team 79 Robotics. Meeting other team members outside of my age group, as well as the adult mentors (including former Team 79 members now in college and local engineers) has been a valuable experience to me.

At our school there are three primary reasons we participate in VEX. Although most teams strive to win every tournament, or to go to the World Championships, our VEX team focuses primarily on learning. VEX can teach you many things when you look beyond the surface. For example, communication is a key skill that VEX has taught us. In Team 79, we stress not only to interact with our own team, but with all of the other teams at tournaments. If we can communicate well with other teams, we can help them with difficulties they may be having. In the end we always remember no matter what the result is, we want to have as much fun as possible. Meeting kids like us from other teams adds to the fun.

In my time with VEX, I’ve learned many new skills that will allow me to flourish in the future. I now have improved skills when it comes to communication and I better understand how to work together in a group to problem-solve complex issues. I feel the techniques my teammates and I have learned will help guide us towards promising futures. I am confident that we will all benefit from our shared learning experiences in VEX robotics.