

When people think about robotics, they probably picture a lot of guys sitting around doing the work. However, we dream of a time when there are girls doing the work as well. Which is why "Girl Power" is such a powerful term in the world of STEM.

In our team last year, our opinions were never heard, and we felt pushed under the bus during many discussions. This year, with our girl powered team, we all get a chance to discuss what ideas we have, and whether or not they would work. Because of this, we have very productive meetings, and our work is efficient.

Because our school is so small, our "Girl Power" isn't very strong. Our team has three girls on it, Emily, Prairie, and Kaylee.

Emily's a senior, and has a lot of experience coding. This year, she tried out building for the first time, and discovered that she really liked having a wrench between her hands and creating things.

Prairie's a junior, and hasn't been able to participate in robotics very much up until this year. She already had a lot of building experience, having worked on a farm, so her new experience was in driving the robot. She's very good at it, and is our second driver in the lineup.

Kaylee is a sophomore, and has a little experience in design, so she enjoyed being put in direct charge of imagining if our ideas would work, and explaining to us what we would have to change between contests. She also tried driving for the first time, and as it turns out, she's a natural. She's our first driver in our lineup, and very important to the team.

Having only girls on the team was very strange at first. We were very used to being talked over and ignored in discussions, so the first meeting was extremely awkward at the beginning. However, after a few minutes of relative silence from ideas, Kaylee decided to take a bit of charge and began asking questions on how we wanted to approach our robot's design. Emily and Prairie began giving a couple ideas, and eventually, we had quite the list of what we could do, and we couldn't do.

This communication revealed to be a strong point in our team. If something goes wrong, then we simply fix it. Our robot is a very aggressive one, we got new V5 motors this year, and it

has really helped in our designing. Our robot is fast and lightweight, so our strategy is more for pushing blocks around, and maybe stacking a few at a time. This is what we found best for our relatively inexperienced builders and drivers to use as a learning year about our team's abilities.

Being girl powered has changed our team chemistry, compared to our regular robotics teams. While they're very aggressive with each other, and won't listen, we are much kinder when somebody messes up. A bad day doesn't result in rudeness, we mostly forgive anything that has been messed up, and try to fix it at a later time. We are all smart, so it makes no sense as to why our male friends put each other down so much for easy to fix mistakes or shortcomings.

We did a lot of research on girls in engineering, and together, we decided to use one of NASA's engineers as our kind of mascot for when we feel burned out. Stephanie Wilson, is not only paving the way in engineering for women, but also people of color. She spent 42 days in space, which is more than any other African American astronaut. When we feel discouraged, or like we're so far behind our other teams, we remind each other that we're also paving the way for more girls to be able to find interest in robotics. At our school especially, young girls don't want to join because they're intimidated by who's already there, and we kind of break down the scary barrier for them to be able to talk to us.