

## Our Definition

How does one define Girl Powered? The REC Foundation and VEX Robotics have made a major push towards creating a more inclusive future for women in STEM fields. In fact, the initiative strives to make robotics a welcoming environment for *every* student. Here at Red River Robotics, we believe in the importance of making robotics available to everyone, regardless of gender or any other title that defines who we are.

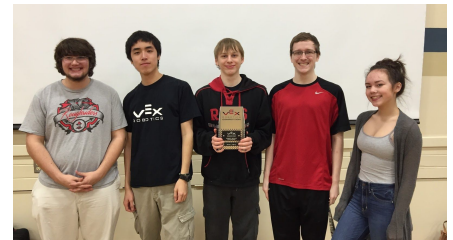
The Girl Powered initiative does raise an interesting question: If Girl Powered is about inclusion for girls, does that mean it excludes boys? Of course not! The creators of the initiative make a point to say robotics is for everyone- and we agree.



## Our Story- Then and Now

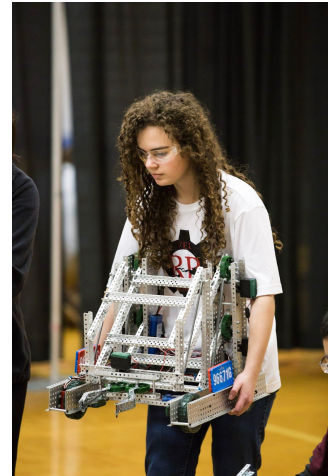
### *In the Beginning*

Very few girls were a part of our VEX Robotics program when it was first created four years ago. While our numbers were low in general-with only two teams of about five members each- we still were unhappy with the low ratio of female involvement. We all thought it was crucial to encourage more girls to join- especially our female first club president, Annika. The next year, we were able to receive a grant to further the development of an equal opportunity program.



## *“Girls Team”*

A requirement for the Girl Power grant was to have a team made of at least 50% girls for two years. Our club had naturally expanded drastically to have more boys *and* girls, allowing us to register three more teams. With the ratio of female to male still being quite low, it was decided to have all of our girls be on one team- 96671G. Here is where my team joins the story. As a team with experience in VEX, it felt right for us to help the new members on the girls team to establish their skills in the VEX Robotics Competition. Leading building and programming was just a start, as we also encouraged girls team members to reach outside their comfort zones with driving and scouting skills for example.



The 2018-2019 season brought another wave of new members, including quite a few more girls. After being elected club president, it was time for me to address an issue. During the previous season, we found that having a team dedicated to just girls was not allowing for growth and display of full potential. When four people with little to no experience were put together as a team, creativity was replaced with learning the basics. We figured that spreading out the girls onto teams with experienced members would lead to higher-level development of new skills, and our higher numbers allowed for such changes while keeping within our grant requirements.

## *Reaching Towards Equality*

Taking the Girl Powered initiative has done much more than simply bringing girls to robotics. As female numbers keep increasing, we are getting closer and closer to our goal of equality in STEM. My team has been at the forefront of encouraging growth in *every* member of our program- the Girl Powered initiative doesn't stop at girls. Having a team of mostly experienced seniors allows us to pass our knowledge down to those who will come after us. Our adviser, Mr. Joseph Ostgarden, is quite the inspiration for developing an atmosphere of equality too! Together with our advisors, teachers, parents, and most importantly fellow students, team 96671X has taken our club and the world one step closer to everything the Girl Powered initiative stands for.





## Our Goal- Final Words

Today, I feel our program is the strongest it has ever been. With multiple teams qualifying for the VEX Robotics World Championship, the structure found within Red River Robotics is an example of excellence. By far, though, I have to say I am most proud of our inclusive atmosphere in every aspect of VEX Robotics. It has always been our goal to make robotics accessible for everyone, regardless of anything that might draw us apart. Our diverse atmosphere of race, religion, orientation, and gender has enabled us to succeed beyond anything we could have ever imagined. Going forward, we hope to continue to provide an atmosphere where boys, girls, and everyone in between are able to share in the opportunities we have provided. Allowing equal chance to all lets everyone choose their destiny.

## Choosing destiny: Grand Forks Public Schools uses electives to create pathways for careers

By [April Baumgarten](#) on Jan 10, 2019 at 7:00 a.m.



-Credits-

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Our Girl Powered Initiative