

## The Beauty of Girl Powered

It all started in August of 2018. Our school was only beginning to incorporate our robotics program. Our grade's teams consisted of an all girl team and two all boy teams. The teams were completely split by gender without any discussion of diversity. At the end of the year, both boy teams qualified for State, and only one boy team qualified for Worlds. The girl team

almost made it to State but unfortunately fell short. All three teams struggled greatly with communication and productivity. No team took the Girl Powered approach to heart because they didn't understand what it meant or how it would aid the program. No team fully worked together and often struggled to respect each teammate and his/her opinion. By the end of the year, the teams decided that it



was time for a change. As a collective group, we chose to begin trying what we now call the "Girl Powered" approach. So, we divided the members of our robotics program into two teams: One team consisted of four boys and one girl, and the other had two boys and two girls. We were aiming at a more successful year but didn't fully grasp the concept and importance of utilizing Girl Power in our program.

Our eighth grade year went more smoothly and was a great opportunity for growth for each of us. Being on a team with and working amongst the opposite gender was definitely a learning experience. We had a few bumps in the road including debates on certain ideas and struggles to listen, but we greatly improved as a team and as friends. Both teams ended up qualifying for State and one team qualified for Worlds. The other team came extremely close to qualifying but did not quite make it. Both teams started understanding what teamwork truly meant and discovered that Girl Powered was the best course of action to take. Every member of our grade's robotics program agreed that coed teams were crucial for success. We each recognized the value of diverse perspectives. Each member, both girl and boy, contributed a different lens of looking at a problem as well as



proposing a different solution. Because of that, the two teams were far more successful and efficient than the previous year when it came to every aspect of robotics, not just building. Driving strategies were improved and increased, the notebook was handled by each member helping each other out, and programming was done efficiently by girls and boys on the teams.



Because of these past two years of experience, our program has become what we always wanted. We share our love for robotics with many people and encourage all students to become a part of it. We make school announcements about the program often and help the younger teams out whenever they need it. Our team now consists of five boys and three girls. We finally understand what Girl Powered truly means: using and respecting the gifts and talents of both boy and girl to create a united and beneficial team. As we've grown, we have acknowledged each other's strengths by trying out each role. For

instance, Jonathan and Andrew found their calling as programmers after not enjoying driving. Grace, Caden, and Porter decided that their strengths lied in building and sometimes driving because they were not fond of programming. Nathan tried each role and became our main driver since he enjoyed that the most. Lastly, Caroline and Gabby realized notebook management and event organizing was their proper calling. Girl Powered has helped us recognize how we each complement one another and provide different strengths. Because of the drastic changes we made after learning from our first year, the friendships between the teammates has grown and deepened, and we have weakened the gap between genders that often presents itself in high school. Now, we are all closer than we've ever been, and we have helped each other grow and mature.

So far this year, our bot design has been greatly benefited from our large and diverse team. Just last practice, there was an issue with getting the ball holding system to work properly. Every member proposed ideas to fix it, and we were able to come up with a nice solution.

We can already tell that this year has gone even more smoothly than both previous years, and we are so thankful that we have applied the concept of Girl Powered to our program. We have continually encouraged the other grades to incorporate it also as our school's program grows.



The long and conflict-filled story of how our program has evolved into what it is now reminds me of the life of Grace Hopper, our stem role model. Grace Hopper was an American computer scientist and United States Navy rear admiral from the mid-nineteen hundreds. She invented one of the first linkers and was the first person to devise the theory of machine-independence programming languages. Throughout her life, she faced many trials with her



research and discoveries as well as conflicts of being a female involved in the military and the field of science. She was often not taken seriously and easily dismissed. She took her trials as an opportunity to grow and become something great, and she did just that. She discovered many amazing aspects of computer science and became one of the best scientists of her time. She was even called out of her retirement for a few years because her old team needed her help. Grace Hopper was an independent, persevering woman and an amazing lady to look up to. Despite our two years of trial and error, our robotics program has continually matured, begun respecting each others ideas and

opinions, and has broken the standard of gender split. Our program has become the amazing opportunity that we've hoped for, and Girl Powered has played a huge role in our team's success.

Credits:

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Legit

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