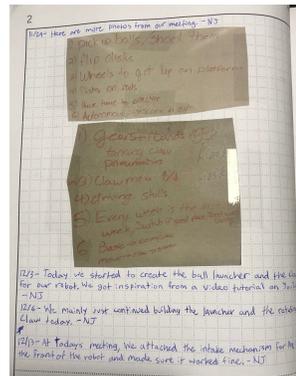
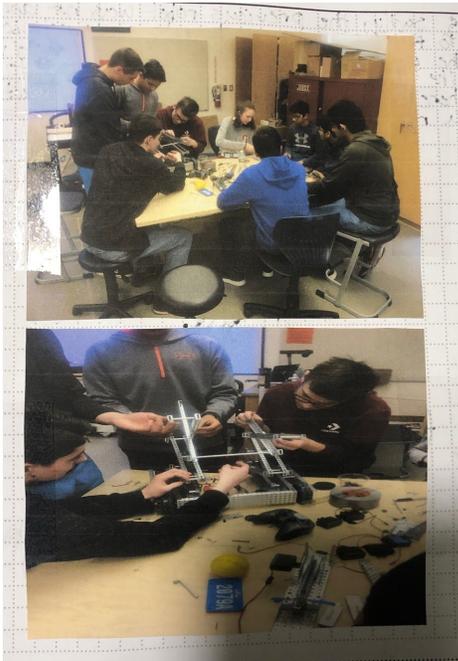


Equality Strengthens All

When I walk into the robotics room, my body instantly relaxes. The robotics room is my safe place, my happy place. Everyone greets each other by their name, regardless of gender. Our team has few females, but has increased each year I have been part of the team and does not change any aspects of our cooperation. We all



collaborate regardless of the task.

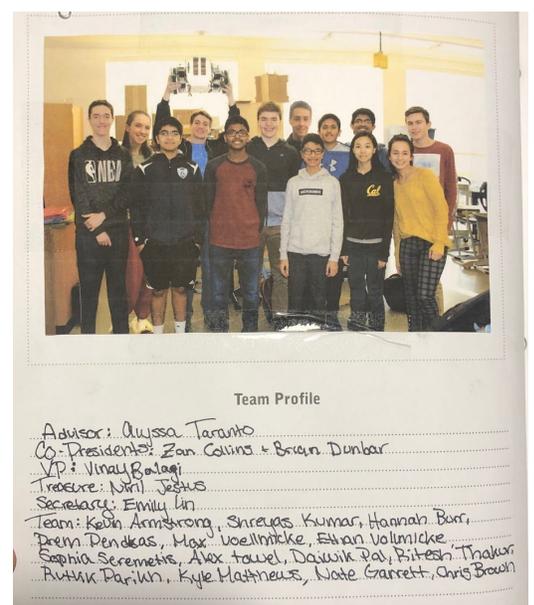
Whenever I speak up, my team listens to what I have to say, all voices are heard regardless of gender. Furthermore, at competitions, everyone participates in a way they feel most comfortable. Honestly,

I am not the best driver on the team, but I always drive at least once during each competition. Everyone receives equal opportunities regardless of the circumstances. "Girl Powered" to

Franklin High School Robotics

means equal opportunities for all.¹²

Our team has taken initiatives to create a more inclusive environment by recruiting a variety of diverse members.³ Specifically, at the club fairs our school has, our team makes sure that there are representatives from a variety of races and genders in attendance. We strive to deliver the message that robotics is for everyone



¹ Pictured the team working on building the robot

² Example from our collaborative planning notebook

³ Our team started with one girl who was only at meetings part time, but as seen in the image, there are now four girls who attend each meeting, one not pictured.

regardless of their background or gender. Since the robotics club at our school has been created, the amount of members, as well as diversity of members, has grown substantially.



Each team member has held different roles to discover what they enjoy most, regardless of skill level. I personally have aided in building the robots we create, coding the robots for the competitions, creating multiple designs to experiment with what would work best for the task we are trying to accomplish, driving at competitions and representing the team when awards are given⁴. While I don't believe that I am the strongest robotics member on the team, if the team's sole purpose is to be stradegetical

about who participates in certain tasks, I do not think that I would be participating nearly as often as I currently do. ⁵

However, even though I am one of the few females on the team, and regardless of how strong a member I am, I am always able to participate in whatever I would like. Robotics club is one of the most inclusive clubs at our school. I have never felt so comfortable with a group of peers, despite being not as skilled as I would like. Though through participation in this club over the past four years my knowledge of and skills in robotics have grown



⁴ Getting ready for the team selection and awards

⁵ The team with two of the girls present (Ms. Taranto is taking the picture)

substantially. My first year I merely observed others on the team, but by my second year I was helping with building and coding.



I believe that diversity of perspective has heightened the success of my team. As a team, we are invested in one goal, and that is to be as successful a unit as possible.⁶ I do not believe that any aspect of the team relies on gender. However, the

ability for ideas from a diverse group of students to be equally considered has allowed more ideas to be heard and implied. Regardless of gender, ideas are presented, team members discuss what they believe will be most successful, and certain ideas are carried out. There is no reliance on whose idea it was, decisions are made for the sole purpose of success.

Specifically, because everyone's voice is heard equally, our ability to succeed is heightened. Rather than some people's voices having more value than others, all voices have equal value, resulting in more ideas and stronger ideas. Our team chemistry is made stronger too by everyone's contribution being equal, allowing us to communicate and collaborate stronger. I have developed strong friendships over the years, though robotics, more than any other club I have ever been in.⁷



⁶ The second place team for Savage Soccer at WPI

⁷ A bus full of friends headed to competition



My STEM role model is our robotics mentor, Ms. Taranto, an art and design teacher⁸. She sets aside every Monday and Thursday afternoons for us to work, as long as we need to, and helps us in any way she can. The club has grown substantially over the years, and I contribute that to her stellar leadership and advice through competitions

and meetings. She always makes sure we are prepared for competitions, which always involves a five to six hour meeting the night before. On days of competition, she meets us in the mornings, helps us with our time management and troubleshooting throughout the day. She always signs us up for opportunities for us to apply our skills and helps keep everyone actively involved.

Initially, it was daunting to walk into a room full of males my first meeting, but then I saw Ms. Taranto and seeing her immediately put me at ease. She was one of, if not the only females involved in the robotics team for a while, and she never gave up on the club, no matter how hard we struggled at times. I am forever grateful for her efforts, and she has truly inspired me to never give up when gender gaps exist. I am no longer intimidated by a room full of boys, I am inspired by the ability to have more diverse voices involved.

Written by Hannah Burr

⁸ Team picture with Ms. Taranto on the far left