

We Code Like a Girl

When we hear the word, Girl Powered, immediately what comes to mind is girl's stepping up and taking leadership and supporting their fellow teammates to do the best they possibly can. Our team is such a great representation of girl powered, partly because we are an all-girl team, and we all show great leadership and teamwork when it comes to our robotics team. Our STEM role model is Rashma Saujani, the founder and CEO of the non-profit organization Girls Who Code, author of *Brave, Not Perfect* and *Girls Who Code: Learn to Code and Change the World*, and the host of the award-winning podcast "Brave, Not Perfect." She started her career as an attorney and activist and was even the first Indian American woman to run for Congress. While running for Congress she visited local schools and realized the gender gap in computer classes which caused her to start Girls Who Code. She is such an inspiring woman to our team because of all the work she does to encourage girls to learn computing skills and how intelligent and kindhearted she is. She inspires us to have a more inclusive team by encouraging us to encourage other girls in our school to join our robotics team and learn valuable computer skills that will open job opportunities for them later in life just like she does. By inspiring us to include everyone and be independent, intelligent coders, our team has become so diverse and full of such strong girl coders.

Our team's diversity helps bring a huge number of diverse ideas on how to fix problems on our robot or how we can work together to use our time efficiently. Our team has taken initiative to create a more inclusive environment that attracts a diverse group of students by showing our team spirit not only in the classroom or in competitions, but also all around our school. We often show our team and robotics skills at after school events where students and their families can see the different activities our school has to offer. The diversity of voices on our team helps provide the foundation for our chemistry. The culture in our program is to hear every voice. Each girl on our team understands what it takes to design and code. We all help build the robot, we all code, and we all participate in activities together. The diversity in our team gives different perspectives on what to do. Having different perspectives makes robotics more fun because then you can try a multitude of things to see which one is more efficient. For example, when fixing our robot because it needs to grip something better, we all pitch in our ideas. As a team, we like to trouble shoot and test ideas. This allows us to see if an idea we thought would never work actually works. Our team culture of inclusivity also helps to attract diverse group of students --- middle school, high school, all races, and family make-up contribute to our success as a team. It does not always mean we win our competitions, but because of our diverse group we learn and grow with every experience. As a team, our diversity not only speaks to our chemistry but it also lays the groundwork for growth mindset which we speak to in our team building activities as well as at team meetings. Diverse perspectives also help in team building activities. When it is time to pick a team building activity, we make sure that someone new gets to pick it every time. When doing a team

building activity, it also helps having diverse ideas in order to communicate better or resolve a problem in a unique way. Diversity also exists in preparing for and going to competitions. It is so amazing that everyone on our team can do everything in robotics because if you are doing something and you get stuck, you always have someone there ready to help.

Teamwork is a big part of our robotics team. To improve our skills, we do a team building activity every week. The activities are always different and fun. As a team we need to communicate, learn, share, make decisions, have respect, compete, have fun and many more. Doing team building activities every week help us gain these skills. Our mentors support us in everything we do. They cheer us on and make sure we perform the best to our abilities. At competition we work together by sharing our thoughts with other teams, making sure the robot is ready to compete, having fun, and more. We have different roles, that we rely on each other for. The team captain gives us the latest information and makes sure everything flows smoothly. The other roles in our team include coders, builders, and competitors. Coders rely on the builders to build the robot so they can get the robot moving. Without the coders and the builders, the competitors would not be able to compete because the robot would not be functioning properly. Everyone relies on the team captain to ensure that the next step is ready to get started. Every year our team try new things such as new roles. Our team captain has changed every year. Personally, my first year on the team I was a coder and the following year I wanted to try something new, so I was a builder. Girl Powered is when girls support each other while working together to achieve a goal and empower other girls to know that any goal is achievable. As an all-girl school and team Girl Powered is very important. Our team always works with the robot to insure she can do her best at the competition. Although our robot is not a human, we support her the same way we would if she were. Remember to have fun!

Our team is an all-girls robotics team which allows us to stand out all on its own. Right now, males dominate the engineering industries, and we find that it is crucial girls are introduced to engineering and can bring their ideas and creations to life. With our team usually being the only all girls team in our league we speak and bring the phrase, “girl power”, into existence. Yes, having a team of all girls is special and different, but we operate successfully in the face of almost every stereotype. We are an all-girls team in an area dominated by the boys, we model teamwork. Our values as an all-girls team is what makes us stand out. Last year we came up with our logo and motto that highlights our team. Our logo is of our pink robot mascot – whom we named Journey, because she represents our journey as a team – and of two girls on either side. Our motto is “We Code Like A Girl”. Being in our league and attending competitions, we have learned along the way what it means to be a team. We have learned that our differences make us stronger and our cooperation allows us to reach new heights. In and out of competition, we always seek to display gracious professionalism to others. We understand that competition or anything in life is not about winning or simply being better, but about the eyes we’ve opened and the mark that we’ve left.

VRC competitions present everyone the opportunity to succeed regardless of their race, background, or gender. The STEM field today seeks for new and creative ideas in order to keep up with the rapid growing technological world that we live in. Diversity of people brings innovation and new ways of thinking to the way we solve everyday problems. Incorporating Girl Power in VRC competitions is important because it shows girls from a young age that even though the STEM field is male dominated, they are still able to succeed. This can minimize the gap between genders and would normalize females entering in STEM fields. Our team works to exemplify just that and to prove to others that success is not dependent by gender or race but of the amount of hard work you put into something. The purpose to lessen this gender gap is not so that women are viewed as better than men but as equals meaning that everyone has the same opportunity to achieve. By incorporating Girl Power little by little it would allow for future generations of girls to not be discouraged but feel capable of doing whatever they set their mind to.

Credits:

Entrants:	Rebecca Alcala, Sloan Atkins, Victoria Bofill, Vivian Bofill, Sabrina Joseph
Team Number:	36719B
Title:	We Code Like a Girl
Coach:	Dr. Choate
School:	Young Women's Preparatory Academy
Administration:	Ms. Tarafa, Principal Mr. Pfeiffere



Two of our teammates working together at a competition.



Our team at a competition



The team logo



Two of our team members



Our team working together to design and code our robot.



Our team winning an award at our school for participating in robotic competitions.