

Belonging

the newsletter from the *FIRST* NC ED&I Team – August 2022

Equity – Treating everyone fairly, having equal opportunities and removing barriers

Diversity – The way we are all different

Inclusion – Creating space for everyone where differences are embraced

Team Share from Team 4935, T-Rex - Leaving an Imprint

Team 4935, or Team T-Rex is a community team located in Charlotte, NC and based out of Olympic High School. In 2021, we were awarded a FIRST Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion grant and with the funds, we created an amazing video with the help of one of our female alumni students which is available here <https://youtu.be/BP79xERvm2c>.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion aren't just "buzzwords" to us, they are an integral part of who we are. We actively recruit students from underrepresented populations, and we don't just focus on college readiness. Data has shown us that the wealth gap between underrepresented students and other groups has WIDENED over the past 30 years when a college degree is obtained. We put a strong focus on trades and apprenticeship programs because not all students are willing or able to attend a traditional 4-year college. We don't just focus on STEM, as we feel that just focusing on that area alone overlooks some of the most amazing students out there that want to be teachers, writers, photographers, artists and more.

We provide a safe and welcoming environment for students of all backgrounds and orientations. 50% of our students as well as our mentors are from underrepresented groups, as we think that it is so important for people to see and learn from people who look like them. We use a recruitment rubric that assigns "points" to students that apply. Things like being a returning student and being female or from another underrepresented group are factors that we take into consideration when we recruit students.

We attempt to be as culturally competent as possible, which allows for students of different races, religions, and ethnicities to feel included. Everything from being flexible during times of religious observation to being willing to provide certain foods are things we take into consideration. We are still, and always have been, a team with an almost zero out of pocket cost to join and participate. Each student is only required to purchase a team shirt and pay for their lunches at competition. We hold our meetings at the school, which is a central location and easily accessible to many of our students who may have transportation issues. This opens our program to many students from economically disadvantaged homes who may not otherwise be able to participate.

We also have a very strong connection with our alumni, and many of our most successful ones are from underrepresented groups. Female students who have gone on to hold their own patents and help create lifesaving surgical equipment. First generation immigrant students who have been able to purchase their own homes before the age of 25. Black students who have not only overcome the poverty that comes with a single parent home, but through our diverse partnerships have careers that help pay for the medication they need for incurable illnesses.

Leaving an Imprint to us, means leaving a lasting mark on every student, every mentor, and everywhere we go. If your team has something they'd like to share, send them to the ED&I team at FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com

From *FIRST*: Just in case you missed it! - Build The Future Spotlight: Pitt Pirates

Supporting STEM access throughout Eastern North Carolina and beyond.

We support access to STEM education for all populations in Eastern North Carolina and beyond through engineering sessions and FIRST® camps at a local elementary school for underrepresented boys, the Greenville branch of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, and several Pitt County Boys & Girls Clubs locations. We also support girls in STEM through our Get the GIST (Girls In Science and Technology) sessions, where we partner with Eastern Carolina University's Society of Women Engineers Chapter, our local National Society of Black Engineers Chapter, and host Girl Scout Innovation events for local Girl Scouts to earn STEM badges.

Read more: <https://community.firstinspires.org/supporting-stem-access-throughout-eastern-north-carolina-and-beyond>

August Events:

August 4th – Birthday of Barack Obama (Black American): Happy Birthday to the United States' first Black president!

August 9th – International Day of the World's Indigenous People (United Nations): created by the UN, celebrates the cultures of indigenous peoples around the world

August 30th – Al-Hijri (Islamic): This holiday marks the start of the New Year in the Muslim faith. It begins the prior evening

August 15th – Feast of the Assumption (Roman Catholic): marks the entry of Mary (mother of Jesus), body and soul, into Heaven

August 18th – Birth of Lord Krishna (Hindu): also called Janmashtami, this day celebrates the birth of one of the most popular deities in the Hindu faith, celebrated with a great festival

August 24th – Birthday of Marlee Matlin (People with Disabilities): Marlee Matlin is the only hearing-impaired actor to win the Oscar for best actor/actress

August 26th – Women's Equality Day: commemorates the American women gaining the right to vote in 1920

August 31st – Ganesh Chaturthi (Hindu): festival celebrating the birth of Lord Ganesh, the God of new beginnings and a fresh start

Inspiration & Recognition Spotlight: Wednesday Holmes

Born: London, England. August 23, 1993



Wednesday is a London based Illustrator, Designer, Writer and Queer community organizer with Voices 4 London and Far and Pride. Wednesday has received worldwide recognition for their artistic contributions for the queer community online. In 2019, Instagram made a short documentary about Wednesday’s art practice which has 9.3 million views. The documentary gave Wednesday the visibility to talk about existing as a Non-Binary Lesbian and the importance of community healing through art. *Click the following link to learn more:*
<https://www.hellomynameiswednesday.com/>

ED&I Retention and Participation Tips: *Ensure participation is affordable or free*

Work to reduce or eliminate costs for the program, for everything from transportation to food. This will help make the team more accessible and limit stigmatization for students who cannot afford aspects of participation.

Learn more @ <https://www.firstinspires.org/resource-library/training-equity-diversity-inclusion>

The *FIRST* NC ED&I Team: Contact us at: FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com

We are a team of coaches/mentors who want to help create a community and culture of people who embrace the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion, who want to develop themselves, and who understand that growth and diversity of all types lead to team excellence.

Anisha Patel - The Pitt Pirates 2642

Linda Whipker - Team PyroTech 3459

Dave Lashley - Team SPORK 3196

Melissa “Bee” Bube - Girls on Fire 5679

All Editions are Available Online at: <https://www.firstnorthcarolina.org/belonging-newsletter>