

Robotics teams build record of success

By Shelly Miller

VEX Robotics was first offered six years ago, and there was one team of six students. East and West high schools now have more than 200 students on 16 teams participating in the voluntary VEX robotics program. And, the schools have a state championship title together under their belt. A local “VEX Robotics Day” was recently declared in Mankato to honor and celebrate local student success and their ambassadorship at state and world competitions.

VEX Robotics teams collaboratively design and build robots from start to finish to compete against other teams in a game-based engineering challenge. They demonstrate ability in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM).

VEX Robotics offers students opportunities to be part of a team. “One of the goals of VEX is to get as many kids involved as possible,” says Dave Stahl, VEX Robotics coach at East High School. “Students in robotics develop soft skills like communication, problem-solving and team work. They develop relationships with other VEX students from competitions around the world.”

“VEX Robotics brings students and the community together,” says Mark Zenk, VEX Robotics coach at West High School. “It helps kids who want to go into STEAM careers.”



Dakota Meadows Middle School students Noah Willard, Brenden Gruber, Raymond Zhao, Blake Pipes, Wyatt Gaalswyk, Saaranish Agarwal and Tyler Hauer at a VEX Robotics competition.

East High School students Leif Stout, Jayden Siegle and Kenny Yu compete at a VEX Robotics competition.

Technology makes a difference in student learning

Students across Mankato Area Public Schools are engaging in advanced technology, which helps them grow, learn and be successful once they leave the classroom. Information technology provides students opportunities to be prepared for the jobs of tomorrow and technology can help find solutions.



Teacher Lynn Matzke works with student Matthew Arndt.

“We listen carefully to what industry and post-secondary partners share with us about what is necessary for students to know in terms of technology,” says Kim Mueller, career and college readiness coordinator. “The understanding of technology has transferrable learning that can be used almost anywhere.”

Through technology, students can collaborate in unique ways as well as build problem-solving skills and critical thinking strategies that can be used in college, their careers and lives. Elementary

By Edell Fiedler, public information students are involved in a maker movement, which provides hands-on collaborative learning opportunities that focus on problem-based and project-based learning. Middle- and high-school students are using Fabrication Labs, also known as Fab Labs, allowing students to use a variety of resources to innovate and be creative with their learning.

“Integrating technology into the classroom is an effective way to deepen student learning and connect with students of all learning styles while supporting instructional goals and standards,” says Tracy Brovold, director of educational technology and information services. “It engages students and empowers them to be more creative and more connected with the world.”

For more information contact staff at 507-387-1868.

Education for all

Mankato Area Public Schools’ staff and faculty are committed to helping everyone succeed. Discrimination is prohibited in policies and practices regarding district personnel and students under section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. Discrimination against anyone with a disability* will not knowingly be permitted in any school programs or practices.

Staff and faculty work to effectively communicate with those who have disabilities to ensure they are given educational opportunities they have the right to receive. Staff and faculty will help eligible students by identifying, evaluating and providing access to needed educational services.

Parents/guardians who disagree with the district’s staff determination have a right to a hearing with an impartial hearing officer. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act provides parents/guardians rights related to educational records by allowing them to:

1. Inspect and review their child’s educational records.
2. Make copies of these records.
3. Receive list of individuals sharing access to these records.
4. Ask for an explanation of any item in the records.
5. Ask for an amendment to any report if it is inaccurate, misleading, or violates the child’s rights.
6. Receive a hearing if the school refuses to make the amendment.

**Qualified disability: Mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities such as caring for one’s self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working.*

For more information contact student support services at 507-387-1818.

Retired couple spends free time giving back to students

By Shelly Miller

As former educators, Leroy and Lori Vetsch are no strangers to students. So when they recently retired from their teaching jobs, their decision to volunteer in Mankato Area Public Schools was natural. The



Leroy and Lori Vetsch work with Prairie Winds Middle School student Damahntae Williams on math.

couple spends three days a week in the classroom at Prairie Winds Middle School sharing their experience, wisdom and talent with sixth graders.

“We wanted to continue to be a part of kids’ lives and help in whatever way we could,” says Lori Vetsch. “Coupling our love of math and science and our desire to mentor youth was a perfect way.”

They bring a unique set of attributes to students in the classroom. “We think we bring not only two more sets of hands to the classroom but a depth of life experience and wisdom that can be enlightening and meaningful to students,” says Leroy Vetsch. “Intergenerational connections are important. We show kids that there is another person in their lives that cares.”

The Vetsches say volunteering in the schools is rewarding. “Spending volunteer time in the classroom gives us a sense of purpose and personal satisfaction,” says the Vetsches. “It makes us feel like we are accomplishing something, giving back and helping the younger generation.”

In addition to helping in the classroom, the Vetsches support Feeding Our Communities Partners Backpack Food Program by delivering food in the form of “Power Packs” to student lockers.

For more information about volunteering at Mankato Area Public Schools, contact staff at 507-387-5501.