Over 80 students participate in local Robotics competition

The 2018 Robotics competition for students in grades 4 - 8 that was held at Wood Middle School on May 12th. Over 80 students representing 12 teams from 6 Alameda public schools participated in the competition. First place went to Wood Middle School’s “Well Done Pepes.” A tie for second was between the Franklin Elementary Vaccines and Bay Farm Dophins. Wood’s 4th-5th team, the Space Bots, captured 3rd place. Other teams included the Kitten Bots and Thunder Bots from Ruby Bridges Elementary, Bilsijacthe from Wood, Fred and Poseidon from Haight Elementary, Terminators from Bay Farm, and two teams from the Academy of Alameda.

The Robotics program is a collaboration between the Alameda Education Foundation, Island City Robotics, Alameda Robotics Center, and Wood Middle School. The 2017-2018 program paralleled the challenges of the FIRST Lego League, but the teams competed locally against Alameda teams rather than regionally.

Through participation in Robotics, students learn critical thinking skills, problem solving, teamwork, time management, and it can provide a gateway into growing technological fields. "Through the robots, each student on each team learns the life skills of collaboration and flexibility," explained Nga Nguyen, a teacher at Wood School who also manages the Alameda Robotics Center program. Academy of Alameda teacher and Robotics mentor Shannon Donahue explains that through Robotics, students often become excited about STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) in a way that is not always possible in the classroom. Donahue says one of the highlights was “engaging students that are low-performing in science and watching them get excited and debate (argue) about scientific concepts like measurement, speed, modelling and other physical ideas that they did NOT like during science.”

AEF Executive Director Vicki Sedlack likens the program to a sports league. “The excitement during the competition was as thrilling as I have seen at any sporting competition, yet at the same time students are learning valuable skills that will help prepare them for further education and future careers.”

AEF and its partners plan to expand the program to include more schools in the 2018-2019 school year and, long-term, develop a year-round program. The 2017-2018 Robotics program was sponsored by Power Up For Learning, a fundraising program of AEF and Alameda Municipal Power; the Great Alameda Business Association; and the Graber Family.

Photo: Courtesy of Alameda Education Foundation