



SUMMER SCHOOL & CAMPS

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Robotic program extends to summer session at Immaculate Heart

Every Friday is “Robotics Friday” at Immaculate Heart’s middle school, where robotics is now officially part of the 6th grade science curriculum, as well as the focus of a new summer school class.

The school purchased six Lego Mindstorm EV3 robotics kits and software. Students have now found a new excuse to linger after class or stay after school so they can learn to program the tiny devices from laptops.

“Overall, the 6th graders are very enthusiastic about robotics,” said Carolyn Polchow, the teacher who oversees the programming.

The 12 members of the middle school’s new robotics team are especially enthusiastic. The team will compete on May 8 in a “Robot Rally” sponsored by California State University, Pomona.

Each week, groups of students tackle a new robotic task, which involves using materials posted on a Google Classroom site. The girls watch videos and then, using the Lego Mindstorm software on laptops in a classroom, program the robots to accomplish different tasks. Polchow said the kits feature four sensors — light, ultrasonic, touch and a gyroscope — and by the end of the semester, students hope to be comfortable using all of them.

For the upcoming competition, students will program their robots to follow a line, navigate an obstacle course, and perform in a “sumo” competition in which the robots engage in sumo wrestling on a circular tabletop arena.

“Robotics also teaches the students perseverance since things never go right the first time you try them.”

*Carolyn Polchow
Immaculate Heart
robotics teacher*

Members of Immaculate Heart’s high school robotics team recently met with the 6th graders, so they can become familiar with the new software. Next year, the high school and middle school robotics teams will compete in the Lego League in separate divisions.

The introduction of robotics at the middle school has already produced “tremendous” benefits, according to Polchow.

“First, it makes students think,” she said. “Robotics teaches them to think sequentially and understand cause and effect. Whatever you

program, the robot does.”

Students, she explained, must also learn to break down simple robotic movements, such as turns, and figure out best way to do them. For example, students have to determine whether a robot should back up first and then use one or two motors to drive one wheel. In the process, the young girls become familiar with terminology unique to engineering, such as beams, gears and axles.

“Robotics also teaches the students perseverance since things never go right the first time you try them,” Polchow said. “What’s important is they have a willingness to learn and an openness to failure.”

Student interest in robotics has been so great that a new summer school class will be devoted to the subject, along with a full schedule of classes open to students entering 6th through 8th grades. The program will run from June 15 through July 10. For registration or information, contact Immaculate Heart’s middle school at (323)461-3651.

Founded in 1906, Immaculate Heart is located at the corner of Franklin and Western avenues in the Los Feliz District. The school educates young women in the 6th through 12th grades. For information, visit www.immaculateheart.org.



photo courtesy of Immaculate Heart

Sixth grade girls at Immaculate Heart middle school excitedly participate in the robotics program and are competing May 8 in “Robot Rally” sponsored by California State University, Pomona. Summer school students will also have an opportunity to participate in the program.

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