

School District of New Berlin's Robotics Program Added Varsity/Junior Varsity Lettering Distinction for 2016-17 Season

New Berlin, Wis. - The School District of New Berlin's FIRST robotics team, NB Blitz, which recently concluded its fourth season, now has varsity and junior varsity lettering, a unique distinction among area robotics teams.

A combined 56 students at New Berlin Eisenhower and West middle/high schools participated in robotics this school year, 19 of whom earned varsity letters and eight of whom earned junior varsity letters based on specific criteria.

"Each year the team is getting better and next year, hopefully, will be no exception," said Blitz advisor Michael Krack.

SDNB's varsity and junior varsity lettering are based on team hours, fundraising, and outreach. For team hours, varsity requires 150 hours and junior varsity 100. Most Blitz participants had beyond those marks, with many students logging more than 300 hours. For fundraising, students must secure \$500 in donations or sponsorships for varsity and \$250 for junior varsity. In total, the team raised \$34,000, the highest yearly amount to date.

For outreach, varsity members must participate in five events while junior varsity must participate in three. The program hosted its first STEM activity fair at New Berlin West in the fall and participated in numerous events at local libraries and schools. Additionally, since 2016, the program has been involved in the Discover New Berlin Fair; put on demonstrations at Summerfest; competed in Robofest at Harvest Fair held at State Fair Park; supported three FIRST Lego League teams at SDNB elementary schools; and more.

"We are hoping to expand our business and marketing team, specifically in terms of community partnerships," added Krack, who also teaches math and computer science at West. "We are hoping to build better relationships with business in and around New Berlin, and we are also hoping to expand our outreach programs and continue to look for opportunities to do so."

Team members liked the varsity/junior varsity criteria and the element of club ownership and leadership it created.

"The varsity/junior varsity status made reaching out into the community and raising funds for the team something to strive for," said team member and junior Nathan Mueller. "It made the experience about more than just working on the robot."

The team competed in pair of regional competitions this spring, ranking 14th in the Wisconsin Regional in Milwaukee in March and 34th in the Seven Rivers Regional in La Crosse in April. Currently, any student who will be attending either Eisenhower or West next fall is able to join the team. Team members will be meeting all summer.

"Co-curriculars like robotics are great opportunities for students to share interests and apply what they are learning in school to challenging projects," Superintendent Joe Garza said. "As we support our Vision of the Graduate, we are proud to offer these types of opportunities that allow students to learn and demonstrate valuable knowledge, skills and dispositions."

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