

POKY KIDS TEAM UP TO ENTER ROBOTICS COMPETITION

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The Robotics program at one east Idaho high school is the first of its kind in the state.

The program is made possible by a grant from the National Science Foundation and gives students hands on experience in engineering and problem solving.

Students, teachers and mentors are so excited about the program they gathered at Pocatello High School on a chilly weekend morning just to get started.

Reporter **Matthew Friend** was there to find out why these students are so willing to attend class on a non-school day.

Students in the Pocatello High School Robotics program spent their Saturday getting a debriefing from NASA ... Their mission, to build a robot and have it ready for competition in 6 weeks.

Mark Edwards/Astronomy And Physics Teacher PHS: "Oh it's just totally exciting, now that we know what the robot looks like we're going to spend the next 6 weeks building the robot. The shift is going to be from 4 to 9 is what we're starting out with, it could go longer."

It's all part of a National Robotics Competition sponsored by NASA for inspiration and recognition of science and technology, known as FIRST.

This is the first full year of the robotics class at Pocatello High School and their first attempt at building a robot for national competition. Cindy Watts is a former engineer and teaches the robotics class.

"This program is going to take an exceptional group of students and pair them up with exceptional adults, and I know there's more out there than what we've met so far."

Students are paired up with mentors from the community who offer inspiration and insight. Jonathon Jensen is a design engineer from AMI - Semiconductor

"It's a blast, I thoroughly enjoy it, helping 'em out, helping the students see how easy it is to be creative and how easy it is to engineer things."

The students spent the rest of the day brainstorming design elements, but they have decided on a name for their robot.

Mark Edwards: "Yes, did I say unfortunately. They decided to call it Mr. T. So, the robot's name is Mr. T. I expect they'll put a lot of bling on him."

Why Mr. T?

Max Clark/Student: "It kind of describes our personality. We're a little bit crazy, we're a little bit out of the box, but we're there. We might sound crazy, but we'll get it done."

In six weeks the team will disassemble their completed robot and ship it off to Portland, Oregon where they will travel to compete in the regional competition in March.

Cindy Watts/Robotics Teacher PHS: "I need them to develop good technology because my time is almost over and I want them better prepared; I want them to be able to do a good job."

Max Clark: "We do want to be the best in Idaho; we want to have Idaho as the best state. There might be interstate, but we'll go together as a team to represent Idaho."

The robotics team is looking for additional mentors from the community. They need a carpenter and are also looking for donations of material to help them complete their robot.

If you have any scrap metal or wood, the team would like to hear from you. You can contact Cindy Watts or Mark Edwards at Pocatello High School at 233-2056.