

Belonging

the newsletter from the *FIRST* NC ED&I Team – December 2023

Equity – Treating everyone fairly, having equal opportunities and removing barriers.

Diversity – The way we are all different.

Inclusion – Creating space for everyone where differences are embraced.

Designing for Neurodiversity: Making In-Person Education Events More Inclusive for All Learners

A summary of quick tips:

- Neurodiversity, as the name implies, covers many conditions / categories. These include dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), ASD (autism spectrum disorder), and more.
- In-person event tips
 - Before the event
 - Ask for input from neurodivergent attendees early in the planning process prior to the event.
 - Provide as much information in advance as possible, helping people feel prepared and reducing surprises.
 - Create a neuro-inclusive schedule and environment.
 - During the event
 - Model and encourage behaviors that support neurodivergent participants throughout the event.
 - Provide content in a way that supports many different styles of learning.
 - Be thoughtful about forced social interaction, and remove or reduce where possible.
 - After the event
 - Provide options for revisiting course or session content.
 - Solicit feedback on all aspects of the event, including neuro-friendly components, but don't require anyone to self-identify.
- Many of these recommendations can also be applied to virtual events.

Want to know more? Check out this link - [Designing for Neurodiversity](#)

Do **you** have tips for other teams on how to include people and help them feel they belong?

Send them to FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com or use this [GOOGLE FORM](#) and we'll include them in upcoming newsletters.

From *FIRST*: Just in case you missed it! - How Student-Led DEI Committees Can Help Build A Culture Of Inclusivity

For the past three years, a committee of *FIRST*[®] students in Washington state have collaborated with *FIRST* Washington to ensure that diverse student voices and needs are not only heard but celebrated.

"It's really important to me that people like me are fairly represented not just throughout *FIRST* Washington, but in general," said Rachel Kollarmalil.

Kollarmalil, a high school junior on *FIRST*[®] Robotics Competition team 4131 "Iron Patriots," is in tune with the challenges many students face regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in their day-to-day lives. Through her role as the current *FIRST* Washington DEI Committee President, Kollarmalil is able to speak out about these important issues and uplift those around her.

Juli Malit, a *FIRST* alum, began sparking discussions around DEI with *FIRST* Washington in 2020, hoping that having these important conversations with staff members could lead to positive changes for all. Read more -

<https://community.firstinspires.org/guest-blog-how-student-led-dei-committees-can-help-build-a-culture-of-inclusivity>

December Events:

December 1: World AIDS Day commemorates those who have died of AIDS and acknowledges the need for continued commitment to all those affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

December 3: International Day of Persons with Disabilities was designed to raise awareness regarding persons with disabilities in order to improve their lives and provide them with equal opportunity.

December 8: Immaculate Conception of Mary, or the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, celebrates the solemn celebration by various Christian denominations who believe in the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

December 8: Bodhi Day, the Buddhist holiday that commemorates the day that Siddhartha Gautama experienced enlightenment.

December 10: International Human Rights Day was established by the United Nations in 1948 to commemorate the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

December 12: Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a religious holiday in Mexico commemorating the appearance of the Virgin Mary near Mexico City in 1531.

December 16 to December 24: Las Posadas is a nine-day celebration in Mexico commemorating the trials Mary and Joseph endured during their journey to Bethlehem.

December 18 to December 26: Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday that is celebrated for eight days and nights. Hanukkah celebrates the victory of the Maccabees, or Israelites, over the Greek-Syrian ruler, Antiochus, approximately 2,200 years ago.

December 21: Yule Winter Solstice is celebrated by Pagans and Wiccans. The first day of winter (and the shortest day of the year) represents a celebration focusing on rebirth, renewal, and new beginnings as the sun makes its way back to the Earth. A solstice is an astronomical event that happens twice each year when the sun reaches its highest position in the sky.

December 25: Christmas Day is the day that many Christians associate with Jesus' birth.

December 26: Boxing Day is a secular holiday celebrated in the United Kingdom, Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, and South Africa.

December 26 to January 1: Kwanzaa is a seven-day celebration of African-American culture and life originally founded in 1966.

December 27: St. John's Apostle and Evangelist Day is the feast day for St. John celebrated by Christian denominations.

December 28: Feast of the Holy Innocents is a Christian feast in remembrance of the massacre of young children in Bethlehem by King Herod the Great in his attempt to kill the infant Jesus.

December 31: Watch Night is a day for Christians to review the year that has passed, make confessions, and then prepare for the year ahead by praying and resolving.

Inspiration & Recognition Spotlight: #PeopleofSTEAM: Meet Ken



As the Founder and CEO of The Neurodiversity Education Research Center (NERC), Ken works to improve access to quality education and workforce development for Neurodivergent people every day. The NERC is an independent nonprofit research center that delivers programs, technology, teaching and learning designs, and other innovative methods to help inform public policy to deliver on their promise of providing access to quality education for all. This promise has also led to Ken and the NERC to start their flagship STEM private school in Phoenix, AZ called Science Prep Academy. Science Prep Academy serves students from diverse backgrounds and means with a research-based education model that was designed to support Neurodivergent students who are specifically transitioning into college and careers.

Ken has firsthand experience starting a FIRST® LEGO® League team for autistic students and was committed to weaving FIRST® into the curriculum at Science Prep Academy. This approach helps students get real-world knowledge and experience along with learning FIRST® Core Values that help them become confident problem solvers and critical thinkers. Read more -

<https://community.firstinspires.org/peopleofsteam-meet-ken>

Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Training: *I Can Be Inclusive Too* e-Course

These interactive Inclusion tools will help you feel confident in understanding inclusion, creating accommodations, supporting and responding positively to behavior challenges and creating supportive environments.

- [Connecting for Inclusion Pt. 2](#)

The *FIRST* NC ED&I Team: Contact us at: FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com

We are a team of coaches/mentors who want to help create a community and culture of people who embrace the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion, who want to develop themselves, and who understand that growth and diversity of all types lead to team excellence.

Anisha Patel - The Pitt Pirates 2642
Dave Lashley (he/him) - Team SPORK 3196

Linda Whipker (she/her) - Team PyroTech 3459
Melissa "Bee" Bube (they/she) - Girls on Fire 5679

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