

# Belonging

the newsletter from the *FIRST* NC ED&I Team – February 2025

**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.

## ***Building Rapport Between Mentors and Students: A Key to Success***

Building a strong rapport between mentors and students is critical in fostering a supportive and effective learning environment. A good mentor-student relationship can enhance trust, communication, and the student's overall growth. A few ways to develop a positive connection is through active listening, providing understanding and empathy, building trust, providing constructive feedback, and of course, encouraging independence.

Active listening is the foundation of building rapport. Mentors should actively listen to their students, giving them space to share thoughts, concerns, and aspirations. This not only helps the mentor understand the student's needs but also shows that the student's voice is valued.

Empathy goes beyond understanding academic challenges. It's about recognizing personal struggles, cultural backgrounds, and unique experiences. When mentors show understanding, it helps students feel more comfortable and less judged, encouraging openness and deeper conversations.

Trust is essential. Mentors should be consistent, reliable, and respectful. When students feel that their mentor genuinely has their best interests at heart and can be trusted with their thoughts and concerns, it strengthens their relationship and boosts the student's confidence in the mentoring process.

Constructive feedback is a tool for growth, but it must be delivered in a positive and supportive manner. Mentors should celebrate the student's successes and offer guidance for improvement in a way that's encouraging, not critical.

While support is key, mentors should also encourage students to take initiative and solve problems on their own. Fostering independence helps build confidence and enables students to take ownership of their learning journey.

Building rapport is not a one-time task but an ongoing process. The more a mentor invests in understanding and connecting with their student, the more likely the student is to thrive academically and personally.

***How do you and your team make members, coaches and mentors feel they belong? Do you have tips for other teams on how to include people and help them feel they really belong?***

Send them to [FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com](mailto:FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com)

## **From *FIRST*: Just in case you missed it! – Extending hands-on STEM beyond the Project Lead the Way classroom**

For more than a decade, Brian Martin, a STEM teacher and robotics team mentor, has leveraged *FIRST*® to offer intensive afterschool robotics programming that builds on what students learn in-classroom through Project Lead the Way. Martin is one of thousands of U.S. teachers and administrators who are using the two programs together to engage and empower the next generation of STEM leaders and innovators.

Read the full report here: [Extending hands-on STEM beyond the Project Lead the Way classroom](#)

## February Holidays and Events:

February is Black History Month in the United States and Canada. Carter G. Woodson started the tradition with the creation of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. In 1926, Negro History Week was established. Since 1976, the month has been federally designated to remember the contributions of people of the African diaspora.

**February 1:** National Freedom Day, honoring the signing by Abraham Lincoln of a resolution that later became the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that abolished slavery.

**February 1:** Imbolc, a Gaelic, Pagan, and Wiccan traditional festival that represents making way for spring and the rebirth of nature.

**February 1 to 7:** World Interfaith Harmony Week, designated by the United Nations, focused on peace within and among all nations and peoples.

**February 2:** Vasant Panchami, is the Hindu festival that highlights the coming of spring.

**February 2:** Groundhog Day. If the groundhog sees his shadow, he predicts six more weeks of winter. If he doesn't, it's a forecast of an early spring.

**February 4:** National create a vacuum day. On this day we are challenged to create a vacuum and explore spaces void of matter.

**February 7:** National bubble gum day

**February 11:** National make a friend day, meet (or at least talk to) someone new. Your life could change forever.

**February 11:** International Day of Women and Girls in Science, designated by the United Nations; working toward gender equality in STEM.

**February 11:** National make a friend day. Encourages people to make new friends and reconnect with old ones

**February 12:** Advocacy at the NC General Assembly - a goal of building legislative support to provide funding to public and public charter schools for after-school robotics programs on a yearly basis.

**February 14:** St. Valentine's Day, is a Western Christian feast day honoring one or two early saints named Valentinus.

**February 15:** Parinirvana Day, is the commemoration of Buddha's death at the age of 80.

**February 17:** Presidents Day, honors the birthdays of George Washington, and every US president.

**February 20:** World Day of Social Justice, promotes global awareness and action for social justice.

**February 21:** International Mother Language Day, designated by the United Nations; promotes linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism based on mother tongue / first language

**February 25 to 28:** Intercalary Days, or Ayyám-i-Há, is celebrated by people of the Bahá'í faith.

**February 28:** Rare Disease Day, raises awareness for people affected by rare diseases

## Inspiration & Recognition Spotlight: Taylor Wilson – American nuclear physicist and science advocate.



Taylor Wilson is a Nuclear Physicist who looks into new ways to harvest energy from radioactive materials. From as young as 11, Taylor has been curious about the way the world works, his interests including space travel, genetics, chemistry and nuclear energy. He became the youngest person to ever create a nuclear fusion reactor when he achieved it at the age of 14, doing all of his work in his parent’s garage. He was self-motivated to complete the task and gained widespread recognition for his achievements.

Read more: [Taylor Wilson](#)

## ED&I and YPP Training: *Blue Campaign – One Voice. One Mission. End Human Trafficking*

Every year, millions of men, women, and children are trafficked worldwide – including right here in the United States. It can happen in any community and victims can be any age, race, gender, or nationality. This two-part training will help everyone connected with youth programs learn to recognize and respond to suspected youth human trafficking.

Youth Professional and Caretaker Training: [Lesson 2](#)

The *FIRST* NC ED&I Team: Contact us at: [FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com](mailto: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 (she/her) - The Pitt Pirates 2642*

*Dave Lashley (he/him) - Team SPORK 3196*

All Editions are Available Online at: <https://www.firstnorthcarolina.org/belonging-newsletter>