

COURSE AND CLUB CREATE INNOVATIVE ATMOSPHERE

In search of an innovative way to educate and engage students, the Lead-Deadwood School District designed a robotics program.

The school district's goal of preparing all students for success after high school provided the motivation to implement the robotics course and club, which provides hands-on opportunities for students with a wide variety of interests and future goals.

"The students involved in the robotics club develop higher order thinking skills that uses creativity, design and problem solving skills," Lead-Deadwood Industrial Technology Instructor Jason Boeding said.

Boeding said most of the skills robotics helps develop will benefit students in their post-secondary education and career. Robotics broadens students' knowledge in STEM – science, technology, engineering and math – subjects. The program is currently sponsored by Goldcorp and has previously received funding from the EPSCor program.



Superintendent Dan Leikvold said the program gives students "a chance to be creative and innovative in an environment that allows them to foster individualism, as well as to collaborate with others."

In 2014, Lead-Deadwood's robotics program participated in the FRC (First Robotics Competition) and this school year took part in a similar type of competition known as the Vex Competition, which is held in South Dakota.

Boeding said the competitions are comparable to a sporting event or tournament with points awarded, game plans devised and a crowd of spectators. He added that students also have the opportunity to apply for various scholarships through the FRC and the Vex competitions.

"The biggest reaction I have seen from students is the excitement as a group working together to build and compete for a common goal," Boeding said.

In addition to the competitions, robotics students have presented an interactive demonstration for 4th and 5th grade students at the district's elementary school during which they explained what the robot was performing and how it was programmed.

Boeding was thrilled by the example students in the robotics program set for the elementary students.

"I was very proud of the robotics class to not only give a demonstration within our school system," Boeding said, "but become role models for our younger generation."

